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Nick Carter Stories

THE INVERTED CROSS

OR—NICK CARTER'S PERILOUS VENTURE

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THE INVERTED CROSS;

Or, NICK CARTER'S PERILOUS VENTURE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE SECRET SIGN.

"By Jove, that's odd! I wonder whether I'm right, and if so—what it signifies?"

The above, quickly followed by thoughts of much more momentous import, flashed through the mind of Nick Carter, the celebrated detective, about five o'clock one September afternoon.

Nick was entering the barroom of an East Side hotel, a house of questionable reputation, suspected of being the occasional resort, if not the prolonged shelter of a certain superior class of criminals, fugitives from the law, and the more elusive and dangerous because of their craft, polish, and education.

The hotel was run by an exceedingly keen and cunning Irishman, named Patrick McPhee, whose caution and cleverness, together with regular sums of money very judiciously placed, had enabled him to stave off police molestation and carry sail with comparative safety.

As a matter of fact, Nick Carter was sauntering into McPhee's place that afternoon in search of a crook much wanted by the police, and whom the detective knew by sight better than men of the regular force. He had undertaken the search only as a personal favor to the chief, however, for the crook was not involved in any case in which Nick had had an interest.

Somewhat to his surprise, nevertheless, immediately after entering the barroom, he caught sight of something that gave rise to the thoughts noted above, and to those that followed. Only one man in a million would have attached any special significance to it, much less a personal one.

What Nick saw, in fact, appeared to be a secret signal. The room was of considerable size, with a long bar running the entire length of one side of it. The wall back of it was flanked with mirrors. On the opposite side of the room and near the rear of it were several small, round tables and chairs for the use of customers. Several men were seated at the tables, while others were lined up at the bar.

As Nick came through the swinging doors, entering from Second Avenue, he discovered a man standing near the middle of the bar. He stood facing the door and quite naturally he noticed the imposing figure and strong, clean-cut face of the detective. For an instant, in fact, the gaze of the two men met.

Nick thought he detected a slight change in the expression of the other's face, but it was hardly perceptible. Instinctively quick to respond to such impressions, however, Nick instantly turned his gaze away from the man. At the same time approaching the bar and ordering a drink, he continued to watch the man—in the mirror. And it was then that Nick detected the suspicious signal.

The man had turned quickly to the bar. Resting his right elbow on it, he crossed the first and second fingers, then bent his wrist until the hand hung downward. At the same time he was gazing, not at Nick, but toward a man seated at one of the tables.

Nick glanced furtively in the same direction, and saw that the same signal was returned by the man at the table. He was a well-dressed, dark-featured fellow about thirty years of age, but whom the detective did not know by sight, even. The man at the bar was, on the other hand, rather roughly clad. He was a stocky, muscular man in the forties, with reddish hair and a bristling brown mustache.

Nick could not recall having seen either of them before, but the sign that had passed between them, made immediately after the slight change of expression he had noticed when he entered, was too suggestive to be disregarded. There was still another reason, even more weighty,

why Nick Carter presently was led to attach serious importance to the incident. The two men had dropped their hands and appeared to have no further interest in one another.

The man at the table, however, now was gazing furtively in the detective's direction. Nick detected him by means of the mirror, for he was standing with his back toward the stranger.

"Yes, by Jove, it's odd," Nick said to himself, sipping his drink and pretending to have seen nothing unusual. "I don't know either of them, but they certainly have an interest in me. A sinister interest, too, or they would not have exercised such caution. What's the meaning of such a sign? It's not that of any secret order with which I am familiar. Two fingers crossed and the hand pointing downward. Inverted as if to denote—— Oh, by Jove, is it possible? The Inverted Cross—one of the symbols of that arch rascal, Gustave Rogler. The symbol I found on the office door of one of his murdered confederates, that shyster lawyer, Frederick Fiske. Is Rogler back of this? Is he engaged in his knavish work again, and are these two men in league with him? If so, there must be more to this than shows on the surface. It's up to me, I guess, to dip a little deeper into the doings of these two blackbirds."

One familiar with the career of Gustave Rogler, or with those criminal ventures in which Nick twice had crossed swords with him, thwarting his designs on both occasions and placing him in charge of the police, would readily appreciate the detective's immediate suspicions upon recalling the secret symbol of this elusive knave. Twice he had escaped from the police, after Nick had rounded him up and given him into custody, together with all of his confederates.

His first exploit in that line, the chloroforming of a police sergeant having charge of him and leaving him manacled with his own irons, had made Rogler notorious. His second escape was no less mystifying and audacious. He had been lodged in the Yonkers jail to await trial, following his arrest for the abduction of the Honorable Francis Harvey, then a New York congressman, on the night of his marriage. Nick had informed the jail officials of the exceeding cunning of their prisoner, and had warned them to guard him with unusual care. He had supposed, of course, that that would be enough to insure his safekeeping.

It appeared, in fact, that unusual precautions really had been taken. Rogler was placed in a cell from which escape by violence would have been utterly impossible. He was not allowed to receive any mail, or parcels, nor to have any visitors except the lawyer he had retained to defend him—a New York City attorney, named James Morley.

Morley called on him several times during the ten days Rogler remained in custody. His last visit was made in the afternoon of the day before that set for the trial. Morley was alone in the cell with Rogler only eight minutes, having informed the warden that he had discovered a new and important legal point which he wanted to discuss with his client.

The lawyer was seen to leave the cell and walk out of the jail just eight minutes later—or that was the supposition. One minute later, the deputy who had been waiting at the corridor door to let the lawyer out went to the cell to make sure it was properly closed and locked. He found Morley lying on the floor, insensible, with a hypodermic syringe, a broken vial, and a few drops of some swift-acting and potent drug, on the stone floor by his side.

Gustave Rogler, disguised with a wig and beard made in precise likeness to the hair and whiskers of the lawyer, and wearing garments so nearly like those of the latter that the difference was not detected—Gustave Rogler was the man who had coolly walked out of the jail, and he had remained out of it to date, moreover, in spite of an immediate alarm and the strenuous efforts made to retake him.

Morley was suspected, of course, but nothing could be proved. He did not regain consciousness for twenty-four hours, and his stupefaction was proved to be absolutely genuine. He vehemently asserted his innocence, stating that Rogler had suddenly plunged the needle into his neck while they were talking, causing an immediate loss of strength and consciousness. Many believed his statements, but Nick still had serious doubts.

How Rogler had obtained the disguise, the syringe, and the vial, as well as what drug he had used, were questions none had seemed able to answer.

Very naturally, therefore, in view of the incident depicted, and the suspicions to which it had given rise, Nick Carter felt an immediate and lively interest in the two strangers who figured in it. He promptly determined to learn more about them, all about them, in fact, if there was any way to accomplish it.

CHAPTER II.

A DARING SUBTERFUGE.

Nick Carter was not long in deciding what method to adopt. He knew that both men had recognized him, and he was by no means sure that they did not suspect him of having seen their secret symbol, or that it had not been made with a design to lure him into some kind of a trap. He had been up against too many crafty games in the past, of one kind or another, to overlook any contingency involved in the present situation.

Nick proceeded, however, precisely as if he accepted the incident at its face value. He paid for his drink and left the barroom without another glance at either man.

Turning the corner of Second Avenue, on which the house fronted, he glanced back and saw that he was not followed; then he darted into a side entrance to the hotel, the office of which was on the second floor, the street floor being used for the barroom and a café.

While mounting the stairway, which then was otherwise deserted, Nick made a lightninglike change in his appearance, putting on a disguise with which he was provided, folding his soft felt hat and slipping it into his pocket, and putting on in its place a plaid woolen cap. He then reversed his coat, made expressly for that purpose, and within half a minute he was transformed into a rather tough-looking type of the Bowery loafer.

Nick had provided for this change, of course, only because he had thought it might be required in the work which had brought him there, and which he now had determined to drop for the much more important business of finding Gustave Rogler, if possible, who was recognized to be by far the most dangerous criminal then at large.

Passing through the hotel office, Nick descended another stairway leading to the café and reappeared in the bar-room in less than two minutes from the time he left it.

There was a change in the situation. The two men had met at a lunch table in one corner of the room, where they were earnestly talking.

Nick bought a glass of beer, then swaggered over to the table with the foaming glass in his hand. Taking some crackers and a slice of bologna, he drew back a little, turning his back to the two men, and began eating and drinking, as if he had not the slightest interest in the two suspects, who apparently had as little interest in him. For they continued talking in low, earnest tones—every word being easily overheard by the listening detective.

"Are you sure of it, Dugan?" questioned the well-dressed man, who had been sitting at the table. "There must be no mistake, no slip-up."

"Mistake be hanged!" Dugan growled. "I know him, blast him, better than I know you, Mr. Scott. I ought to, all right. Didn't he send two of my pals up for ten years? Wasn't I nosing around the courtroom corridors all through the trial? You can bet I was, Scotty, and I heard him testify. I know him, all right, the devil take him."

"He must have got a line on this place, then," said Scott thoughtfully.

"Sure he has," Dugan forcibly agreed. "Why else was he here? You can bet he didn't come in only to buy booze."

"It won't do, then, for the big gun to come here."

"Thunder! I should say not."

"I'd better put him wise, Dugan, and lose no time about it."

"Sure! There's no telling what that fly bull has up his sleeve."

"When shall I see you again?"

"Not until evening. We'll meet at the quarry. The big gun won't leave there after hearing from you."

"Certainly not. But I have an engagement this evening and cannot show up before nine o'clock."

"What matters? I'll be there."

"You may expect me at nine, then."

"Good enough. You've got the password?"

"Yes, of course."

"You'll need it. There's a couple of new men in the gang and some one will be at the peek. That's all for now."

"I'll be off, then, and get next to a phone."

"Make sure you're not watched and overheard."

"Trust me for that."

"So long, then," Dugan quietly growled. "I'll see you later."

Two courses appealed to Nick: One, to shadow Scott; the other, to stick to Dugan. The former appeared the less promising, and Nick promptly decided upon the latter. He returned his empty glass to the bar, then again sauntered out of the place. As well as he could judge, neither of the two men had noticed him.

Scott was hurrying up Second Avenue and he quickly vanished around the nearest corner.

Five minutes later Nick saw Dugan going up to the hotel office. He slipped around to the side entrance, dashed up the stairs, and entered the office just as Dugan was seating himself in a corner near one of the windows. He had taken an evening paper from a table, and soon was absorbed in reading it.

Nick sat down in an opposite corner, where Dugan must see him when he looked up. Ten minutes passed before he did so, and then he discovered the detective steadily eying him, as if with more than cursory interest.

Nick immediately gazed from the window. After a moment, however, knowing that Dugan then was watching him, he crossed the first two fingers of his right hand, and made the sign described. Then, carelessly turning back, he saw Dugan study him for a moment and then return the sign.

Nick winked expressively, then arose and swaggered over to Dugan, taking a chair near him.

"I reckoned I was right," he said quietly, yet with sinister accent.

"Right about what?"

"You're Dugan, ain't you?"

"Yes, that's my name," Dugan allowed, still regarding Nick suspiciously.

"I thought so. I don't often mistake a covey, once I get a good description of him. That's how I knew you."

"By a description of me? Where did you get it?"

"From the same party who put me wise to the secret sign I just gave you."

"You know him, then?"

"Well, rather!" said Nick expressively.

"But I don't know you," Dugan doubtfully growled.

"You will after to-night."

"What d'ye mean?"

"At the quarry," said Nick, banking with characteristic boldness on what he had overheard. "I haven't been rung in yet, so am a stranger to most of the gang, but he knows me. He'll put the others wise to who I am, and what I'm good for."

"Who will?"

"The party I spoke of—the big gun."

"Oh!" Dugan's grim face suddenly lighted. "You must be one of the new men he told me about."

"That's me," Nick quickly nodded.

"Is your name Donovan?"

"Donovan is right. I've known Gus——"

"Dry up!" Dugan quickly muttered. "Don't speak his name here. The walls might have ears. We've got on too big a job to take such chances."

"You're right, Dugan," Nick agreed. "I ought to have known better. He said 'twas a big job."

"The biggest ever! But we'll not talk about that, either, if it's all the same to you," Dugan significantly added. "When are you going to the quarry?"

"I'm to be rung in to-night and given a knock-down to the rest of the gang."

"What time?"

"That's up to the big gun. I'm going early," said Nick evasively, feeling that he was on thin ice, and that the slightest slip of his tongue might betray his crafty subterfuge. "He didn't set any hour."

"Why don't you go along with me?" Dugan demanded. "I was thinking of starting just as I saw your signal."

"When are you going?"

"Right away. What do you say?"

"That's good enough for me," Nick declared. "I'll go."

"Come on, then." Dugan arose abruptly. "Keep your trap closed while in the street."

"Trust me for that," said Nick; then, in confidential whispers: "On the dead, Dugan, I'm rather glad to go along with you, for I've been fool enough to forget something."

"Forget something?" Dugan paused and gazed at him.

"Yes."

"What's that?"

"The password," said Nick. "I could fix it all right, of course, by having the big gun called to the peck. But he might be busy, you know, or think me an infernal bonehead for forgetting it. So I am, as far as that goes."

Dugan apparently was completely deceived by the detective's story, to which Nick had artfully given color by making use of much that he had overheard. The crook grinned, and replied:

"Bonehead, eh? Well, I can help you out, Donovan."

"What d'ye mean?"

"By telling you the password."

Nick bent nearer.

"Whisky mash!" breathed Dugan. "That's it; whisky mash!"

Nick cracked his knuckles against his forehead and pretended to remember.

"Hang it! so 'twas," he replied. "That's just what he told me. All I could think of, Dugan, was a gin sling. I reckon that's because gin is my long suit in the booze line. Whisky mash—sure! That's the password. I've got it safe in my block, now, all right."

"Come on, then," said Dugan. "We're wasting time."

It was nearly six o'clock when they left McPhee's hotel and emerged into Second Avenue. Nick Carter had no idea where they were going, of what the so-called quarry consisted, or where it was located, nor did he very much care. It was enough for him that he had picked up a trail leading to Rogler's hiding place, and he was eager to follow it there.

That he might get into hot water, that his daring subterfuge might be discovered, that he might be caught in his own trap and find himself at the mercy of a gang of rascals who long had feared him, whose vengeful hatred would be satisfied only with his death—to the fact that he was taking these risks, though by no means blind to them, Nick did not give a moment's serious consideration. He was ready and eager to carry his life in his hand, if, by so doing, he again could put Gustave Rogler in a prison cell and prevent the big job then engaging him.

Nick accompanied Dugan to Madison Avenue, pretending all the while that he knew where they were going. After walking north some distance, Dugan turned west and headed for Fifth Avenue.

Then, for the first time, Nick detected signs of caution in his companion, the significance of which was obvious to him. Plainly, they were nearing their destination.

Nick fished out a partly filled clay pipe and crowded the tobacco a little closer, then fingered in his pocket for a match—which he failed to find.

Presently he stepped in front of an approaching stranger, who was smoking a cigar.

"I say, sir, have you a match?" he asked. "I want a light for my pipe."

"I guess so," said the stranger, feeling in his pocket. "Yes, here are two. Take both."

"Thankee, sir." Nick nodded expressively. "Much obliged."

"Don't mention it."

The stranger's face wore a look of surprise.

Nick had glided by him and was lighting his pipe.

Dugan had walked on several yards, so abruptly had the detective stopped, and then had merely glanced back and waited.

The stranger at once moved on without turning his head.

"I was near dead for a smoke," Nick explained, puffing vigorously and tossing away the burned match.

"Why didn't you get a match from me?" growled Dugan. "I've got some."

"I wasn't sure," Nick readily answered. "I saw that bloke smoking, so I reckoned he'd have one. He handed out two, so I'm one to the good."

"Well, you'll have to stow the pipe in half a minute," said Dugan. "We're to duck into that court the dray is coming out of."

"Sure we are," Nick nodded. "I know that, all right, but I can have a puff and a spit before we get there."

Nick glanced at the broad arched sign over the entrance to the court mentioned, which ran in back of a large stone building fronting on Fifth Avenue. The sign read: "Gainard & Boyd, Agents. Richmond Rye."

"H'm! I guess that password is on the level," thought Nick. "Whisky mash, eh? These men evidently are distributing agents for some Southern distillery. I've seen their office sign on the front of this building. Here goes, however, to learn what more they are."

Nick was following Dugan into the narrow court, from which a dray laden with several whisky barrels had just departed.

A man in a blouse and overalls was standing at the door of a merchandise lift some thirty yards from the street. He waited upon seeing Dugan and his companion approaching, and Nick noticed that he crossed his fingers.

Nick promptly did the same, whereupon the waiting man nodded and grinned.

"What d'ye want?" he inquired, addressing Dugan.

"Whisky mash!" said Dugan.

"And you?"

"Whisky mash," said Nick; then to himself: "And a mash at all of you fellows."

"Gainard around?" Dugan tersely inquired.

"Down below," was the reply. "I'm just closing up."

"Take us down," said Dugan. "We'll use the lift. Come on, Donovan. Let her go, Taggart."

Nick stepped upon the elevator. The man in blouse and overalls quickly drew down the heavy door closing the entrance and shot the bolts into their sockets. Daylight was turned to Egyptian darkness. Nick heard the rattle of wire ropes and the lift began to fall. He shifted a revolver to his side pocket and waited.

CHAPTER III.

UNDER THE SURFACE.

The lift fell about eight feet, then stopped. Then Taggart, the man in blouse and overalls, banged twice on a heavy door. Nick heard the quick click of a spring, and a small square opening appeared, through which a flash light gleamed and a low whisper came sharply:

"What's doing?"

"Some are doing time," said Taggart; "but we're doing business."

"How many?"

"Three."

"What names?"

"Taggart, Dugan, and Donovan."

"Donovan——"

"He's all right," Dugan quickly put in. "He knows the secret sign and password, Boyd, and the big gun expects him. Let us in."

Bolts clanged and the heavy door was slid to one side.

"Come, in Donovan," muttered Dugan, grasping Nick's arm and drawing him from the lift.

There was no light except the flash lamp in the hand of the man who had admitted them to the basement, and who then proceeded to lead the way.

The shifty beam of light danced over numerous barrels, from them to a dingy ceiling, then to a scarred, cement floor, and a stone foundation wall which they were approaching.

Nick wondered whether they were to bring up against it, or go straight through it, for he could see no door or an opening of any kind.

Nevertheless, there was some kind of an opening. For the light suddenly vanished, leaving only inky darkness, and a moment later when the light reappeared, Nick found himself—on the other side of the wall.

He glanced sharply around, with curiosity increased, as well as his misgivings. He was in a narrow passage making downward at quite a sharp incline. There was a stone wall on each side. The floor was damp earth, and an earthy smell pervaded the place. Nick knew they must be descending lower than the basement of the vast building.

"By Jove, this smacks of deviltry on a large scale, for fair," he said to himself. "Big job is right, I guess, but what kind of a job? Is Rogler outdoing himself this time?"

Half a minute brought them to another door, which was opened by Boyd, the man in advance. A switch key clicked audibly, and a flood of electric light illumined—an underground room.

The ceiling was braced with heavy timbers. The walls were comprised of thick planking. There were several chairs and a small table in the room. In one corner was an opening into a dark passage leading—Nick could not tell where. He heard the door close behind him, and then the voice of Dugan.

"Sit down, Donovan. Shake hands, first, with Mr. Boyd and Taggart," said Donovan. "The big gun will soon show up. Have a chair while you're waiting."

Nick shook hands with both men, who smiled and greeted him cordially, and he then sat down on the nearest chair.

And then came the exposure of the double game that had been in progress.

Nick no sooner had touched the chair than a revolver was clapped to his head, and Boyd's voice threatened him with a hiss like that of a snake.

"Don't stir, Carter, or you'll be a dead one! Foot or finger, mind you, and I'll shoot. Move lively, boys, and fix him for keeps."

There was no occasion for the last commands. Dugan and Taggart had seized Nick from behind. Handcuffs snapped sharply. Chains clanked and jingled noisily. Within a minute, for Nick made no resistance whatever, he sat chained hand and foot to the chair, with his arms and wrists secured to the back of it.

"There!" Dugan exclaimed triumphantly, while he rudely tore off the detective's disguise and cast it upon the floor. "I guess those will hold you for a while. Now, Mr. Nick Carter——"

Dugan was interrupted by a voice from the gloom of the passageway mentioned. There was no mistaking its hard, metallic like ring, its sinister, sneering qualities.

"If it is all the same to you, Dugan, I will do the talking with Mr. Nick Carter."

He entered while speaking, the master knave whom Nick had expected to see, the slippery scoundrel who had given him so much trouble, the most dangerous criminal of his day—Gustave Rogler.

He looked more lean and lank than when Nick last saw him. He was gaunt and white, as if a stranger to the sun and the fresh air, as if he had been for a long time in this dismal underground hole. His eyes were sunken, darkly ringed, and they gleamed and glittered with abnormal brilliancy.

He was rubbing his hands with malicious glee, nevertheless, when he entered, clad in soiled overalls and a dirty canvas jacket, with an old slouch hat pulled over his brow. There was something uncanny, diabolical, in his aspect and the venomous zest with which he greeted the detective.

"Welcome! welcome! thrice welcome!" he cried, approaching till he stood about six feet in front of Nick, while his confederates fell back a few paces.

"We meet again—what pleasure! what delight!" he went on shrilly. "I told you, Carter; I told you. I warned you that sooner or later I would get you. And I've done it—I've done it. My satisfaction is beyond expression. I'm sorry, terribly sorry, that the conditions preclude my shaking hands with you."

"Sorry, are you?" Nick sternly answered. "On the contrary, Rogler, I am mighty glad of it. I am very particular with whom I shake hands. I exclude all such rascals as you. When I touch your hands, it will be to put them in irons. I'll wager, too, that I again shall do so."

"No, sir, never again! Don't bank on that," Rogler retorted. "I twice have failed to beat you out, but the third time never fails. I've got you. I've got you, now, where there is no possibility of escape for you, where your end is assured. I told you—I warned you."

"A fig for your warnings, Rogler," Nick replied contemptuously. "Your threats affect me no more than water on a duck's back. You've got me just now, I'll admit, and a very clever trick you played to accomplish it."

"Clever—pshaw! don't say that. It's child's play to get you, Carter, when necessary. You are so clever yourself that it operates to your own disadvantage. I knew you would recall one of my old symbols—The Inverted Cross. I knew you would fall for the trick and try trickery yourself. We were ready to meet it halfway. Oh, it was——"

"Very easily done, of course," Nick cut in scornfully. "Well, well, make the most of it. I know, now, to be sure, that I was duped from the first, that Dugan recognized me all the while, and that the whole business was only a game to lure me here."

"We shall, Carter, I promise you," Rogler darkly de-

clared. "Take my word for that—we shall make the most of it."

"No doubt—if nothing prevents."

"Nothing will. We shall guard against that."

"You appear well installed for doing so," said Nick, bent upon learning as much as possible. "What's your object in making such a hole as this? Is it your refuge from the police, or are you digging through to China?"

"We are digging for gold," Rogler replied, with a shrug and leer that brought a loud laugh from Dugan and Taggart.

"Gold, eh?" queried Nick, a little puzzled.

"Gold—yes!" nodded Rogler. "When dogs like you thwart the costly projects of men like me, you compel us to take immediate steps to replenish our purses. We have been about it for some time—for months, in fact."

"Digging gold, eh?"

"Digging after gold. We soon shall strike a rich pocket. The end of our work is near—and the reward."

"Is that so?"

"Do you doubt it?" Rogler spoke with icy contempt, then glanced sharply at his listening confederates. "Let him see for himself. I want him to know before I end him how big a job we shall pull off, how exultantly I laugh at him. Take him up and bring him after me. Light the way, Boyd. He shall see for himself—for himself—for himself!"

The venom of the rascal appeared too deep and deadly for words. He turned abruptly, shaken with bitter hatred, and vanished into the passage from which he had emerged.

Boyd, a clean-cut, good-looking chap, barring his sinister eyes, threw a beam of light after the rascal, then followed him. Dugan and Taggart raised the chair in which Nick was seated, then bore him after the departing couple.

Nick viewed the excavation with increasing interest. The tunnel, for such it was, was about three feet wide and fully twenty yards long. It appeared to run nearly parallel with the court outside, though evidently some little distance from it. It led to another room about ten feet square, the earth walls of which were upheld with planking. An incandescent lamp lighted it. Another electric wire of considerable length was coiled around a hook near by. Obviously, a secret connection had been made with some powerfully charged wire outside.

On the floor were two glass carboys, one empty, the other containing about a gallon of green fluid. Near by was a firkin half filled with a brown substance resembling soft soap. On the floor were a number of tools, clamps, drills, and fine-steel saws. Near one of the walls were several pieces of steel rails, about five feet long, both ends of which were covered with a greenish coating. They appeared to have been corroded, or eaten away.

What chiefly claimed Nick's attention, however, was the ceiling and some upright joists supporting it, or a part of it in which a five-foot square hole had been cut, about eighteen inches upward, revealing what appeared to be part of a metal floor. He also could see the ends of steel rails protruding from the masonry, each corroded like those on the floor.

The truth dawned upon Nick, in fact, even before Rogler, after briefly watching him, disclosed the design and details of his knavish work.

CHAPTER IV.

ROGLER'S BIG JOB.

"Ah, you see what we're doing," Rogler cried, after a moment. "Digging for gold is right, eh? That metal surface at which you are gazing, Carter, is the base of the main vault in the banking house of Harvey & Cardiff. In three days—nights would be more correct—we shall be able to drop a section of it and enter the vault. When we leave it we shall leave nothing of value in it."

Nick had, indeed, immediately detected the nature of the knavish undertaking. Finding Rogler communicative, his assurance evidently arising from a conviction that the detective was helplessly in his power, Nick now resolved to learn as much as possible about the contemplated robbery, for which such a vast amount of work had been done.

"I can easily believe, Rogler, that you will make a complete clean-up," he replied. "Harvey & Cardiff, eh? That's a big banking house. Weren't you satisfied with putting up one job on Francis Harvey?"

"Ah, but you queered that job," Rogler rejoined, with some asperity. "I might have been satisfied—but for you!"

"You should have expected no less."

"Expecting no less in this case, we've guarded against it," Rogler dryly retorted. "The abduction of Harvey would have panned out handsomely, if you hadn't butted in. I resolved to get the best of you and the best of him. There is satisfaction in beating those by whom one has been beaten. He was in Congress then. Cardiff was looking after the banking business. But he's here, now, and soon shall feel my teeth. His vault often contains a million in money, bonds, and negotiable securities, and we shall know just when to strike, just when the biggest haul can be made."

"You appear to have earned all you will get," said Nick, gazing around. "You have done a vast amount of work here. It must have taken a long time."

"Months."

"And much skill and cunning to escape detection."

"I have my share of both."

"You have, indeed, Rogler. I'll give you credit for that."

"How good of you!" Rogler spoke with a sneer. "But the job wasn't as difficult as you suppose. The conditions are perfect. The banking house occupies the entire ground floor in the north corner. The offices are five feet lower than the street and sidewalks, running back to the rear court sixty feet from the avenue. There is no cellar under that part of the building, and a robbery from below would seem quite impossible."

"That's true," Nick admitted.

"And that made suspicion improbable and reduced our risks," Rogler went on, in his sneering fashion. "A long corridor adjoins the banking offices. On the opposite side are the quarters of Gainard & Boyd, agents for a popular brand of whisky. This gentleman is Mr. Boyd, one of the agents."

"I'm very glad to know him," Nick said dryly. "I think we shall become better acquainted sooner or later. The agency, of course, is only a blind."

"Oh, there is a legitimate business done there, but only on a small scale," Rogler said, with a leer. "The chief business—well, you can see for yourself."

"Yes, very plainly."

"It was necessary, of course, to devise some way for secretly removing the material excavated in order to reach this point," Rogler proceeded. "Whisky barrels served admirably. Who would suspect that our drayman was trucking away earth and stones, neatly headed up in our barrels? They served, too, to bring in such things as we required."

"Very clever, Rogler, indeed," said Nick.

"We began with building a blind wall in our cellar, with a secret entrance to the passage afterward constructed behind it, that leading to the first underground room. The tunnel runs under the corridor mentioned, and this excavation is directly under the banker's vault. It mattered little to me that the floor and base of the vault was protected with steel rails set in the foundation masonry. I took out the cement around them with electric drills. There are some of them on the floor."

"Yes, I see them," Nick grimly nodded.

"Steel rails yield like bars of soap, Carter, to a chemical combination which I have discovered," Rogler went on. "Some of the acid used is still left in one of the carboys. The other ingredients are in the firkin. I would give you the formula, Carter, if you could possibly have any use for it. But you will have no use for anything, or anybody, save an undertaker, after this venture on your part into our quarry."

"Quarry, eh?"

"Is the name not appropriate?" Rogler grinned maliciously. "You would say so, indeed, if you knew how many stones have been dug out and handled here. We have reserved a few for you."

"For me?" questioned Nick.

"With which to construct your final resting place."

"Indeed! Of what is that to consist?"

"Unless I change my mind, Carter, I shall wall you up in a niche where you'll never be found," Rogler darkly asserted. "You are much too dangerous a foe to be left alive. I decided that I must get you before this job was completed, lest you should serve me the same trick that you twice have done. I now shall guard effectually against it, take my word for that."

"If it depends on your word only, Rogler, I do not feel any serious alarm," Nick coldly retorted.

"Is that so?" sneered Rogler. "Wait, then, and see."

"I seem to have no alternative."

"Nor have you," snapped Rogler. Then, turning abruptly to his confederates, he added sharply: "Fix him for the night, boys, and stow him away in some corner. There still is work to be done here."

"I'll look after him, Gus, with Taggart to help me," said Dugan.

"Do so, then."

The two ruffians raised the chair again and bore Nick back through the dark tunnel and into the outer room. That they had a more considerate streak in them than Rogler, however, presently appeared.

"Since you've got to stay here, you might as well be made half easy," Dugan growled. "We'll fix you so you can lie down, instead of sitting in a chair all the while."

"All right, Dugan," said Nick. "I'll do as much for you some time, perhaps."

"Perhaps is right. You're not likely to get the chance."

"Oh, there's no telling," Nick said indifferently.

The two rascals proceeded with their work, and in a few minutes had bound Nick hand and foot with strong cords. They then placed him on a pile of burlap bags in one corner of the damp and chilly room, and then returned to rejoin Rogler.

Left to himself, Nick had time to consider the result of his perilous venture, but the nature of his thoughts were in keeping with his character, and far from pessimistic, despite his threatening situation.

Throughout the night he could hear the gang at work in the inner room, or at intervals when he awoke from an occasional nap, and, though he now knew exactly of what Rogler's big job consisted, he could only conjecture what work the burglars then were doing.

There was no daylight in the underground quarters, but the day dawned, nevertheless, and the work of the gang was suspended.

They trooped out and went to an upper part of the building, Rogler included, leaving only one of their number in charge of the detective. They looked haggard and weary, and even Rogler did not so much as glance in Nick's direction.

"They have gone up to get in some sleep," he said to himself. "In the meantime, perhaps, there will be work done of another kind. It must be early morning, I imagine, and they'll not show up again till evening. I wonder if I'm to be kept here three days—and then walled up for keeps. They have quit work until to-night, evidently."

Nick's conjecture was a very natural one, under the circumstances. It was, nevertheless, not a correct one. For early in the afternoon, as well as he could judge, Rogler and the entire gang came hurrying down to the underground rooms. They appeared pale and excited. Rogler, though he said nothing to Nick, looked like a man on the verge of a frenzy. He led the way to the inner room, and for half an hour it was the scene of an earnest discussion, too subdued to reach the detective's ears.

"By Jove, they are much disturbed by something," thought Nick. "I would like to gamble a trifle that Chick and Patsy have been getting in some work that alarms the rascals. By gracious! they are resuming operations, though much more quietly than during the night."

Nick could hear them at work, but still could not tell what they were doing. He knew that the afternoon had not passed, however, and he wondered what occasioned the haste and excitement, for both steadily increased, in fact, from hour to hour.

Members of the gang rushed from one room to the other, and at times to the agency overhead, all the while paying absolutely no attention to the powerless detective.

"By Jove! there's something in the wind," Nick decided. "I believe they are going to crack that vault to-night. There must be some reason for rushing things in this fashion."

Recalling Rogler's threat, and knowing that the rascal would not shrink from killing him, Nick had been casting his eye around for some place of concealment, thinking that he might escape the threatened fate, in case the gang was compelled for any reason to make a hurried departure.

Nick could discover, however, only one corner that would serve for even a temporary hiding place. Back of the edge of the planking upholding the wall quite near him,

a quantity of the earth had crumbled away and fallen to the floor, running down below the planks and leaving considerable space behind them.

"By Jove! I'll take a chance," he said to himself. "If I can worm into that hole, I may contrive to fool them. I will seize the first opportunity."

It did not come for some little time, well into the night, when he was left alone in the room for a few moments. Then, rising with some difficulty, Nick contrived to reach the planking, throwing himself into the space back of it, then drawing in his feet and legs and kicking some of the earth down in front of them.

He scarce had accomplished this move, when, from the inner room, he heard the thud of a fallen body, followed by low cries of evil exultation.

CHAPTER V.

WHY NICK WANTED A MATCH.

It was seven o'clock in the evening, that on which Rogler and his confederates had succeeded in luring Nick Carter into their clutches by means of the artifice described.

That the success of the rascal was not as complete as they supposed, nor Nick as short-sighted and reckless as he might have seemed, became apparent when a stranger rang the doorbell of the detective's Madison Avenue residence and was ushered into the study, where Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan, his chief assistants, then were seated.

"My name is Carver," he announced, looking a little embarrassed. "I'm not sure that I've not been made the victim of a practical joke. I thought I'd take a chance, however. Is Mr. Nick Carter at home?"

"He is absent just now, though we expect him at any moment," said Chick. "I am in charge here, however, and may be able to help you. What's the trouble?"

"Oh, no trouble, sir, as far as I am concerned," Carver replied, smiling. "I may have been a fool for coming here on such a mission."

"What mission, Mr. Carver?"

"Well, it was like this," Carver began. "While I was heading home for supper about an hour ago, I met two men on the street. One of them stepped up to me and asked for a match. I gave him two, which he took. There would have been nothing remarkable in that, if he had not winked very expressively, and, while taking the matches, slipped a wad of paper into my hand."

"Ah, I see!" Chick nodded, smiling. "I guess you have not been fooled, Mr. Carver. The man probably was Nick himself."

"Well, I now begin to think so, though I had serious doubt of it," Carver replied. "Anyway, I tumbled to the fact that he didn't want his companion to suspect what he was doing, so I took the wad of paper and walked on without looking back."

"Quite right, I'm sure."

"After turning the nearest corner, I opened the paper and found two leaves torn from a notebook. Both are covered with writing. It begins with directing me to bring the communication here without delay, which I have done. If you can translate what follows, you'll do better than I can. It looks like hen tracks to me. Here are the two leaves."

Chick took them, glanced at them, then waved the visitor to a chair.

"This is very good of you, Mr. Carver," said he. "Yes, this is Nick's writing. Part of it is in secret characters known only in this office. Sit down, please, while we translate it. I think I then may wish to question you."

"Certainly."

"You may have done us a service of considerable importance. Take one of the leaves, Patsy, and transcribe it."

"Sure thing," cried Patsy, hastening to comply.

"I'll do the same with the other."

"This smacks of something doing," Patsy added, while he seized a pencil and pad of blank paper.

It took Chick and Patsy only a very few minutes to transcribe the communication which Nick had so artfully sent them without Dugan so much as suspecting it.

As briefly as possible, though covering every detail, it told them what had occurred in McPhee's barroom, giving them a description of Scott and Dugan, of the secret sign that had passed between them, the nature of Nick's suspicions and designs, together with all of special significance that he had overheard—all of which had been stealthily written while he sat watching Dugan in the hotel office before accosting him.

Before resuming the conversation with Carver, they briefly discussed the matter in subdued tones, both seated at Chick's desk, and both keenly realizing the hazardous nature of Nick's venture.

"He knew he was taking a long chance, Patsy, or he would not have sent us these particulars," said Chick. "He suspected a trap, and went into it voluntarily in the hope of landing Rogler again."

"Gee! that's like him, all right," said Patsy. "He foresaw that he might possibly get in wrong, and he sent this for us to work on, in case he fails to show up."

"Certainly."

"But why didn't he phone and put us wise? We could have lent him a hand."

"He thought he might be watched, perhaps, and preferred to go up against the game single-handed, rather than risk losing the opportunity," Chick rightly reasoned.

"Mebbe so."

"He wrote these particulars on the sly, in all probability, and then hung onto them until he learned what Dugan would require of him. It's obvious that he was going somewhere with Dugan when Carver met them."

"Sure thing," Patsy agreed. "Furthermore, Nick must have known that they were near their destination, or he would have waited for an opportunity to add further particulars."

"Certainly."

"There can be only one reason for his turning the trick with Carver at just that time. He knew he was going under cover and might not be able later to send us word."

"That's right, too," said Chick.

"See what more Carver can tell us."

Chick acted upon the suggestion. He turned to Carver and said:

"Pardon us for keeping you waiting. You have helped us in some very important business."

"Good enough!" Carver put in heartily. "I'm glad of it. If I can do anything more, command me."

"I wish you would describe Nick Carter's companion."

"He was a stocky, muscular man, of medium height, and about thirty years old. He was dark, smoothly shaved, and was roughly clad. I think he wore a woolen shirt."

"That answers Nick's description of Dugan," said Patsy.

"Could you identify him, Mr. Carver?"

"I think so."

"He moved on while Nick Carter was asking you for a match?"

"He did, and then waited. I don't think he suspected anything."

"Nick Carter never turns such tricks so awkwardly as to incur suspicion," Chick replied. "Did he wear a beard?"

"Yes."

"He was in disguise, then. I guess, Patsy, we are sizing it up very nearly right."

"Gee! it looks to me like a copper-riveted cinch."

"Now, Mr. Carver," Chick added; "please tell us precisely where you met the couple."

"Do you know the Kellogg Building, in Fifth Avenue?"

"Yes."

"They were approaching it through the side street. There's a narrow court back of it, and they were about fifty feet from its entrance."

"You don't know where they went?"

"No. After the expressive look Mr. Carter gave me, as I have said, I decided not to turn back to watch them."

"You did perfectly right, Mr. Carver," said Chick. "We have reason to suspect that there is a big game on of some kind. Are you in a position to aid us still farther, if we should require it?"

"Certainly," said Carver.

"I do not know that you'll be needed. That will depend entirely upon whether Nick returns home during the night. If he does not, some quick work must be done. Where do you live?"

"In Lexington Avenue. There's a telephone in the house. Here's my card, with the phone number."

"That will simplify matters," said Chick, taking it. "If we need you, I will call you up in the morning. For whatever we may require, as well as for what you already have done, you will be paid liberally."

"Pshaw! I am more than glad to lend you a hand. Will you ring me up before nine o'clock?"

"Yes, if at all."

"Very good!" Carver exclaimed, rising to go. "We'll leave it that way."

Chick arose and accompanied him to the door, thanking him heartily for the service rendered. He then turned back and rejoined Patsy, who still was studying Nick's hurriedly written missive.

"Why that deal with Carver?" Patsy inquired, looking up. "How can we use him to any advantage?"

"To identify Dugan," Chick replied.

"We ought to be able to find him."

"Don't be too sure of it, Patsy. That name may be an alias. The gang in McPhee's place may never have heard of Dugan. Furthermore, if they trapped Nick there, the rats will steer clear of the place for some time. They'll take no chance of having been noticed."

"Gee! there is something in that," Patsy now admitted.

"On the other hand, the trap having been laid with considerable assurance, neither Dugan nor Scott may have taken a fictitious name, though both may be strangers in McPhee's place. In that case, we can make good use of Carver. There aren't more than a hundred Dugans in the New York directory. We can, if Nick fails to show up, start Carver on a still hunt after Dugan, using the directory for a guide. He can identify the rascal, and sooner or later will be likely to find him."

"I guess you're right, Chick, after all."

"I know I'm right."

"How about the 'quarry' where Nick heard Scott and Dugan agree to meet? I know of no saloon, house, nor any dive by that name."

"I don't think it referred to either. I think the word may have some secret significance."

"But it refers, I'll wager, to the place Nick was going with Dugan."

"So will I, Patsy, as far as that goes," said Chick. "But if Gustave Rogler is directing this job, as well as the big job Nick heard mentioned, he will have taken care to leave no loopholes open. He's an infernally crafty rascal, and one not easily trailed to cover. Nick didn't know what his game consisted of, or he would have informed us. He evidently thought it big enough, nevertheless, to warrant the risk he has taken. There is only one move we can make to-night."

"What's that?" questioned Patsy.

"I think, as you said, that Nick did not send this communication until he had reason to believe he was nearing the place to which Dugan was conducting him. According to Carver, it must be somewhere near the Kellogg Building. We'd better go up there in disguise and nose around a bit. It's barely possible that we can pick up a thread worth following."

"Good enough! I'm with you," cried Patsy, hastening to make ready.

It was half past eight when they approached the Kellogg Building from the same direction taken by Nick and Dugan. They had no reason, of course, for suspecting that building in particular of being the shelter of criminals, or the scene of any contemplated crime.

Lights were burning in some of the rear rooms and offices, though most of the great building was shrouded in darkness.

"Here's the court Carver mentioned," said Chick, as they approached it. "It leads to the lifts and some rear doors. We'd better not stop, nor appear to be sizing up things in this locality. If the rascals really have got Nick, they may have a spy on the watch for any one nosing around here. Rogler is very cunning, and he knows that Nick is not easily fooled, much less lured blindly into a trap."

"I'm wise," replied Patsy. "Let's saunter on and turn the corner."

A high picket gate secured with a padlock closed the entrance to the court. Chick had merely glanced between the pickets while passing, and there was little to be seen through the gloom within.

The low windows of an elaborate suite of banking offices occupied by Harvey & Cardiff were for the most part in darkness. In only one office, that nearest the rear of the building, an incandescent lamp was burning. It lighted several desks in a railed inclosure, also the broad face of the huge steel vault containing the cash, bonds, and securities of the bankers.

"Here's Harvey & Cardiff's banking house," Chick remarked, glancing down into the lighted office while passing the windows. "By Jove! it may be that Rogler has designs upon that vault. Now that I think of it, Patsy, this is the same Harvey whom Rogler abducted on the night of his marriage to Julia Delmore."

"Right you are, Chick."

"There appears to be nothing wrong at present," Chick replied, as they turned the corner and came in view of the Fifth Avenue front of the building. "There's a whisky agency on the opposite side of the corridor. Some one is at work in the office."

They walked on until they could look down into the lighted office of Gainard & Boyd. Only one person could be seen—a gray-haired man perched on a tall stool at a desk, apparently making entries in a huge ledger. The office safe was open, and the elderly man, Gainard himself, apparently was working late to finish up a busy day's work.

If Chick Carter could have lifted the gray hair, however, and braced back the bowed shoulders of the man at the desk, he would have discovered the close-cut black hair and sturdy figure of a muscular fellow of forty. But that was impossible, and the aspect of things in the office of Gainard & Boyd were such as to dispel, rather than occasion, suspicions.

In other respects, moreover, the search made by Chick and Patsy that evening proved entirely futile. They separated for a time, watching the streets, the people, and the saloons in that locality, but could discover nothing nor anybody inviting suspicion.

It was midnight when they reached home, only to find that Nick had not returned, that no further communication had been received, and that the circumstances fully justified their increasing misgivings.

CHAPTER VI.

SEEKING THE TRAIL.

Patsy Garvan found Chick in the study when he came down the next morning. It then was only seven o'clock.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "How long have you been down?"

"Since five," Chick tersely answered. "I've had my breakfast. Yours is ready on the table. Eat it, and then prepare to get busy."

"The chief has not returned."

"No, nor any word from him. We must set to work. We can't hang around here like shirts on a line. I've talked with Carver, and he'll be here in ten minutes. Get a bite to eat, and I then will tell you my plans."

Patsy rushed out to obey, returning just as Carver was admitted by a servant, and both rejoined Chick in the office.

"I infer that Mr. Carter has not returned," said Carver, after their greeting. "He must be in wrong, as you feared."

"In wrong is right, Mr. Carver, but I can't stop to give you any particulars," Chick replied. "I have a use for you, and I think you can make good. If you can, it'll be money in your pocket."

"Tell me what you want," Carver eagerly responded. "I'll tackle it like a hungry hobo."

"I want you to find the man you saw in company with Nick," Chick proceeded to explain. "I think his true name is Dugan. Here is a leaf from the directory. It contains all of the Dugans recorded in New York City. You must look up each of them, taking them in the most convenient order. You will know the man if you see him?"

"Surely."

"If you find him, then, keep your eye on him till you can communicate with this office. Here is the phone number. State who the man is, where he lives, where you are when you phone, and what the man is doing. If he moves before one of our force can join you, try to learn where Dugan is going, then leave word, and continue to shadow him. Don't let him suspect you, but keep track of him, and keep this office informed. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"You may go at once, then, and begin your work."

"All right, sir," said Carver, turning to the door. "I've a hunch that you'll hear from me later."

"I hope so," said Chick. "Now, Patsy, it's up to you to find the other man, Scott. There would be nothing, I'm sure, in making inquiries at McPhee's place. We've got to take a chance that these two men used their true names, and try to locate them."

"It looks fairly good to me," nodded Patsy.

"Here is another leaf from the directory," said Chick. "It contains all of the Scotts. I've run through them and crossed out with a pencil all of the women, as well as some of the men whom I know personally, or by reputation. Go after the others, Patsy, and have in mind Nick's description of the man we want."

"Trust me for that. What are your own plans?"

"I'm going to resume work where we dropped it last night," said Chick. "I've got it on me good and strong that our game is somewhere in that locality. I may meet with more success by daylight than we had in the dark. If you get wise to anything, you'll find me somewhere near the Kellogg Building, probably in disguise. You'll know me, however, in that case."

"Bet you!" Patsy exclaimed. "Say!"

"Well?"

"Can't you make use of that secret sign, the crossed fingers, in some way? You might spring it on various persons employed up that way. If you got a response, you'd know you'd nailed one of the gang."

Chick considered it for a moment, then shook his head.

"Too risky," said he tersely. "I might betray myself."

"Why so?"

"Because that sign may have been used only to trap Nick. If, in that case, I were seen to use it by any of the gang who have trapped him, they would at once suspect my identity, and know that Nick must have contrived in some way to communicate with us."

"Yes, that's true," Patsy thoughtfully admitted. "Still, you might keep your eye peeled to catch some one else using it."

"That's better," Chick allowed. "I'll not forget that. Going?"

"Yes." Patsy had completed his preparations and was heading for the door. "I'll see you later."

"I shall leave in a very few minutes."

It was half past eight when Chick departed, wearing a simple disguise and carrying others in his pocket.

The more Chick considered Nick's communication, the stronger became his conviction that his deductions were correct, that Nick had not accosted Carver until sure he might not have another like opportunity, and that the gang into whose hands he evidently had fallen must be quartered within a comparatively short distance from where he met Carver.

Nine o'clock found Chick in Fifth Avenue, directly opposite the Kellogg Building. He was gazing toward the

broad main entrance to it, in fact, when a man rounded the corner and entered the building.

"Morley!" The name leaped up in Chick's mind. "James Morley, the lawyer Rogler employed to defend him, and who was suspected of aiding him to escape from the Yonkers jail. By Jove! I'm in the nick of time. They still may be in league. This Morley may be in search of Rogler, or have an appointment with him."

Chick was not idle while these promising thoughts flashed through his mind. Crossing the avenue, he reached a point enabling him to see which way Morley turned after entering the building. Not a little to Chick's surprise, he turned to the left and entered the banking office of Harvey & Cardiff.

"Well, well, that's strange," muttered Chick, pausing for a moment. "What business can he have in there? It's not probable that he carries a deposit with a banking house of this kind. It would be out of his way, moreover, for his office is on Park Row. By Jove! I may have hit the nail on the head last night. Rogler may have a job on to rob Harvey, and one of the banker's clerks may be in league with him, with Morley for a go-between. I'll find out with whom he's talking."

Knowing that he should not be recognized, Chick followed the lawyer and entered the general office of the bankers, with both of whom he was acquainted. Again he was somewhat surprised.

Morley, a dark, well-built, bearded man in middle life, was talking with the junior member of the firm, Mr. Samuel Cardiff. The latter was a tall, light-complexioned man in the forties, with a somewhat weak and inferior type of countenance. They were sitting in two of the large leather-covered chairs in one corner of the office, and appeared to be discussing matters of a private nature.

"Am I in wrong?" thought Chick, upon observing them. "Morley's business should be legitimate, or he would not be talking with Mr. Cardiff. I thought I might catch him with one of the clerks. Nevertheless, I'll go a step farther."

Approaching a clerk in the latticed inclosure, he asked quietly:

"Has Mr. Harvey come in yet?"

"Yes. He is in his private office," said the clerk, with a glance at the office door, which was standing open.

Chick turned that way. He discovered Mr. Francis Harvey alone in the room, seated at his rolltop desk. Entering, Chick said familiarly:

"Good morning, Harvey! What do you know this morning?"

The banker turned in his swivel chair, expecting to see a near friend, having been addressed with such familiarity. Instead, he saw an entire stranger, or thought he did.

"I can tell you better, perhaps, what I don't know," he replied, frowning slightly. "I don't know you."

"Oh, yes, you do," said Chick, laughing quietly. "Don't betray any surprise, Harvey, for I'm here on rather delicate business. With your permission, I'll draw up a chair. My name is—Chick Carter."

"Oh, by Jove!" Harvey grasped the detective's hand and shook it warmly. "I see, now, but I never would have recognized you. I'm delighted, Chick, on my word! How is Nick? Bless him! Why don't he drop in and see me?"

"I wish he might just now."

"What do you mean?" Harvey was quick to notice Chick's more serious tone. "Nothing wrong with him, is there?"

"I fear so, but cannot explain just now. Don't betray anything, Harvey, but take a look at the man with whom Cardiff is talking. You know him?"

"I do not."

"Not one of your depositors?"

"No, indeed. He occasionally calls to see Cardiff, but I have asked no questions."

"His name is James Morley," said Chick. "He's a lawyer with a rather shady reputation."

"H'm! is that so? Isn't he the man who is thought to have helped that wretch Rogler to escape from custody?"

"The same. How long has he been coming here?"

"Why, I think I saw him soon after my return from Washington, four months ago. His business must be of a personal nature, or Cardiff would have informed me."

"He is going," said Chick. "Invent some plausible occasion for calling Cardiff in here. Incidentally, then, introduce me as Mr. Jasper, a friend of yours, and let me talk with him. Don't butt in, nor appear surprised at anything I may say. I'll explain later."

"Very well," bowed Harvey, taking a letter from his desk. Then, turning toward the open door as Cardiff was approaching his own private office, he said carelessly: "One moment, Sam, if you please. Here's a letter from Barry, our Boston correspondent, which you can answer better than I. Do so, will you?"

"Yes, certainly," said Cardiff, entering and glancing at Chick.

"Shake hands with Mr. Jasper," Harvey added. "He's an old friend of mine. I hope we shall have the privilege of handling some of his money one of these days."

Cardiff laughed and shook hands with the detective.

"We'll handle it very carefully, Mr. Jasper, I assure you," he said agreeably. "I'm glad to know you."

"The same to you, Mr. Cardiff," Chick bowed. "I see you know another acquaintance of mine; that is to say, I'm acquainted with him by reputation."

"Yes? Whom do you mean?" questioned Cardiff, looking perplexed.

"The man you have been talking with."

"Ah!"

"I'll give you a tip," Chick added: "If you have any business dealings with him, or retain him professionally, make sure you have a cast-iron contract. If you don't, Mr. Cardiff, you'll get the worst of it."

"Really! I'm surprised!" Cardiff now looked it.

"What use have you for a lawyer, Sam?" Harvey asked carelessly.

"Well, I haven't said anything about it to you, nor to any of my friends, in fact," Cardiff gravely replied, after a moment. "Affairs at home aren't just to my liking, however. My wife and I don't agree worth a cent. I'm talking of a separation. I've discussed it at times with Mr. Morley. That's all."

"Dear me! I'm sorry to hear it," said Harvey.

"Well, it may come to nothing."

"Of course, Mr. Cardiff, you receive my information in strict confidence," said Chick. "In view of your relations with Harvey, and knowing Morley to be a bit off color, I thought it was up to me to put you wise. Take it for what you think it is worth."

"Yes, yes, I will," Cardiff replied, more heartily. "I'm

obliged to you, Mr. Jasper, and will say nothing about it. Very much obliged, I'm sure."

"Don't mention it," said Chick, as Cardiff bowed and withdrew.

"Well——" Harvey began.

Chick held up his forefinger.

"Drop it," he said quietly. "Say nothing to him about it, and evade any questions he may ask about me. Tell him I've gone to Boston, and that I merely dropped in to see you when on my way to the train. I don't want Morley to suspect anything."

"But Cardiff will not betray you."

"Probably not."

"Certainly not," Harvey insisted. "He's as square as a brick. Besides—you're not going?"

"Yes." Chick arose, smiling, and laid his hand on the banker's shoulder. "Now, don't ask any questions, Harvey, and don't give this matter another thought. It does not relate in any way to your business affairs. I had a reason for calling on you, however, and will do so again, if there should be any occasion. Not seeing me, you will know there is none."

"Very well." Harvey held out his hand. "I know better than to question you, Carter, when told not to do so. Good-by—and good luck!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE CLOSING NET.

Chick Carter lost track of James Morley, of course, by remaining to question Cardiff. He felt that he had made no mistake, however. He did not believe Cardiff's explanation of his relations with the lawyer. He had faltered when making it, and it seemed only reasonable to suppose that Harvey would have known it, if his partner was involved in domestic troubles.

All this led Chick to believe that Cardiff had some secret business with the lawyer, and indirectly with Gustave Rogler, perhaps, and that the big job engaging the latter might involve all three and relate to something outside of the bank.

"I'll keep an eye on him and see if he makes any move of significance," Chick said to himself, while leaving the building. "If he really is playing any underhand game with Morley, I have said enough to cause him misgivings, if not seriously alarm him. That being the case, he may betray himself by making some move of which I can take advantage, or determine what is in the wind. I'll shift my disguise, and watch the place for a while."

Chick entered an adjoining building, found a convenient corner in which to make a radical change in his appearance, and five minutes later he found concealment in a doorway from which he could see the windows of the banking offices and the corridor adjoining them.

His vigil was not immediately rewarded, nor did he expect it. He could see the clerks at work, and twice he saw Cardiff give instructions to one of them, but not until one o'clock did anything occur that increased his suspicions.

He then saw Cardiff appear in the corridor, wearing his hat and a fashionable light overcoat.

"He's going out to lunch," Chick said to himself. "He may have made an appointment by phone to meet Morley and tell him what I have said. I'll follow him and see."

Instead of departing, however, Cardiff lingered in the corridor. He sauntered back to the elevator, glanced up the broad stairway, and appeared as if waiting for some one from one of the upepr floors. Presently the gray-haired man whom Chick had seen at work in the office of Gainard & Boyd the previous evening, Gainard himself, came out of his office with several letters to be dropped in a box in the corridor. Cardiff met him, and they shook hands. Most observers would have said the meeting was only a casual one. Both bowed and laughed, saying merely a word to one another, and then they parted —and Cardiff walked briskly out of the building and down Fifth Avenue.

"By Jove! the net is drawing closer," thought Chick. "That meeting was prearranged. The old man came out only to receive something from Cardiff, or to give him something, which was done when they shook hands. A note, perhaps, conveying information which they did not wish to impart in so public a place, or in order to avoid talking long together. I must find out who the old chap is, and just what is being done in a business way by that whisky agency. Cardiff first, however."

Gainard had dropped his letters and returned to his office. Cardiff was walking briskly down the avenue, apparently without a care in his mind, and Chick shadowed him to a popular restaurant in that locality, where Cardiff lunched alone and entered into conversation with nobody. He then returned to his business, and Chick dropped him for a time.

Crossing the avenue, Chick sauntered through the side street, taking another look into the court back of the building. Taggart was sitting on a whisky barrel near the lift by which Nick had been taken into the basement occupied by Rogler and his gang. There was no other person in the court.

Chick's suspicions were steadily increasing. He wondered whether the lone man on a barrel was acting as a sentinel. He thought of the secret sign, but decided he might make a serious mistake if he were to use it. He moved on, and walked entirely around the block, returning to the doorway opposite the entrance.

Three o'clock came, and the banking house was closed for the day. Some of the clerks departed, and, half an hour later, Harvey came out and joined his wife, who had arrived in an automobile. Chick recognized her, and rightly inferred that she had come to accompany her husband home.

Cardiff departed at four o'clock in company with one of the clerks. They were the last to leave. The clerk locked the doors, and the two men sauntered down the avenue.

"Gone for the day, all hands," thought Chick. "Does this end it? Not by a long chalk! If there isn't something doing over there, I'll eat my hat! I now will see what——"

Chick's soliloquy was cut short by a signal whistle from the doorway of a drug store on the opposite corner north. He looked over and discovered Patsy Garvan, in disguise, who immediately walked up the avenue and signed Chick to follow him.

"I thought I could find you," said he, when they met.

"Something doing?" Chick questioned.

"Yes. I've just come from home."

"Nick hasn't returned?"

"No such luck!" said Patsy. "Carver has identified Dugan, however, and found out where he lives. It's a

tenement in Second Avenue, but he wasn't at home last night, nor this morning. Carver got that from Dugan's wife. He pretended he was calling with a message for Dugan, and identified him by means of a photograph on the mantel. He's a bad egg, judging from what Carver has learned about him. He is now watching the house."

"Good enough!" said Chick. "Anything more?"

"Yes. The other of even greater importance. I know who Dugan's companion was, the man named Scott."

"Capital! What about him?"

"His name is Philip Scott. He's the fourth man of that name whom I undertook to look up. The directory gave his business address on Park Row. I went there and located him. He's employed in the office of a lawyer."

"Not Jim Morley?" Chick exclaimed.

"You've guessed it," said Patsy. "That hits the nail on the head."

"Have you seen Scott or Morley?"

"Neither of them," said Patsy. "I've got a description of Scott, however, from a man in the next office. It corresponds perfectly with the one Nick sent us."

"I see."

"Scott lives with a married sister in Harlem. I found that there was a telephone in the house and I called her up. She told me that Scott was not at home last night, and she could give no information as to his whereabouts. It's odds that he was with Dugan after nine o'clock, as Nick heard him agree to be. Do you see the point?"

"I see a good many points," said Chick. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that Nick must have been right," Patsy replied. "Scott works for Morley. Morley was Rogler's lawyer. It's dollars to fried rings that he not only let Rogler drug him, but also provided him with the disguise with which he escaped from Yonkers jail. It's a thousand to one, then, that Morley and Scott now are in league with Rogler."

"They are not the only rascals in league with him," Chick said grimly. "I've got a hunch, Patsy, and I'm going to act upon it. First, I'll tell you what I've seen and done."

"Go ahead," Patsy nodded. "Cut loose."

It took Chick only a very few moments to inform him. As he expected, Patsy was quick to see the significance of it.

"Gee! it does look bad," he declared. "Morley calling on Cardiff, and Cardiff up to some sort of monkey business with that whisky agent. If these connecting links are worth anything, there must be a big ring of rascals. It seems hardly possible, however, that Cardiff can be one of the gang."

"He may have been duped in some way."

"Perhaps."

"Rogler, you know, is remarkably clever in blinding a man till he weaves a net around him."

"That's true," Patsy thoughtfully admitted. "Wouldn't it be well to question Cardiff straight from the shoulder?"

"No. We might throw a shoe. If Cardiff is one of the gang, he would certainly deny it, and put up a bluff which we could not successfully call. We should only show our own hands without accomplishing anything. He then would warn the gang, inform them of our suspicions, and we should lose what little advantage we now have."

"Yes, that's right, too," Patsy again agreed. "How would it do, then, to tackle the whisky agent? We might put something over on him," said Patsy. "We can pretend to be buying whisky with which to stock a saloon, and in that way obtain a view around the place and see whether things appear to be on the level."

"Nothing in it," Chick said tersely. "We should be at the same disadvantage as in questioning Cardiff. The trick would be suspected. We should end only in exposing ourselves. No, no, Patsy, we first must get a more definite line on the game, and also secure evidence in proof of it. I have a hunch, I'll tell you, and I'm going to act upon it."

"What's the hunch?"

"Simply this," said Chick: "The circumstances all point to one thing, a design upon that banking establishment. There is no other near establishment in which a big job could be done. It may be a case of burglary, a plan to crack the vault, or it may be some other scheme of robbery."

"But that vault isn't an easy one to crack," Patsy argued. "It can be seen from the street, day or night, and it's so located that crooks couldn't get at it from either side."

"Nevertheless, Patsy, I'm going to devote one night to clinching my suspicions, or turning them down and out of our way."

"What's your scheme?"

"Come with me and I'll tell you," said Chick. "There will be nothing doing for a few hours, at least, and I feel like a famished sailor. I'll get a bite to eat, and then—well, come on and I'll tell you."

CHAPTER VIII.

JUST TOO LATE.

At eight o'clock that evening Chick Carter and Patsy appeared at the door of Francis Harvey's superb home in Riverside Drive, the former Delmore residence, where they rang the bell. The butler answered the summons, and Chick sent in his card.

Harvey was much surprised when, upon entering the library, he found both detectives awaiting him.

"Well, well, am I honored with a social call?" he said genially, while he shook hands with both. "I'm glad to see you."

"It's something more than a social call, Harvey," Chick replied.

"Well, to tell the truth, Chick, I imagine so," smiled the banker. "Two visits in one day must surely signify something. What's the trouble?"

"Sit down, Harvey, and I'll tell you."

"Very good. Now, then, I'm all ears."

"To begin with, Harvey, have you a set of keys to your bank?" questioned Chick.

"Yes, of course."

"Who else has keys?"

"Cardiff and one of the clerks, George Deacon."

"Has the vault a time lock, or combination?"

"Combination."

"You can open it, of course?"

"Certainly."

"Very good," said Chick. "Now, Harvey, I think we can steal into your bank about twelve o'clock without being seen. We wish to do so, and you must go with us."

"Good heavens!" Harvey gravely exclaimed, with increasing amazement. "What's the occasion for it, Chick? Do you suspect anything wrong?"

"I know there is something wrong."

"A burglary under way?"

"I'm not yet sure," said Chick. "I wish to make sure, Harvey, if possible, and that is why I wish to spend one night in your office."

"But what grounds for suspicion have you?"

"I'll tell you."

Chick informed him as briefly as possible, yet omitting none of the essential details. The face of the banker lost color while he listened. He drew up in his chair when the detective had concluded, saying gravely:

"By Jove, Chick, I'm astonished. I cannot believe that Cardiff is in any way crooked."

"He may, as I have said, be the dupe of a gang of rascals, or for some reason in their power," Chick replied. "Be that as it may, Harvey, we must spend a night in your office. What would you say, offhand, that your vault now contains?"

"I cannot say accurately."

"More than usual, or less?"

"More," said Harvey apprehensively. "We are carrying a large amount of cash, bonds, and securities with which to meet our obligations and disbursements on the first of the month. There must be a million or more in the vault. This would be the worst possible time for us to have a burglary."

"It is a significant fact, then, if this job is to be attempted at just this time," Chick pointed out. "I'm not sure that it is, mind you, but the circumstances are not to be wisely ignored. How long has that whisky agency, Gainard & Boyd, been in the building?"

"About six months."

"Are you acquainted with them?"

"Yes. They seem to be all right. Boyd is a young man, a very prepossessing fellow. Gainard is much older, with gray hair. He looks after the books."

"I know him by sight," Chick remarked.

"But what object have you in spending the night in my office?" questioned Harvey. "If a burglary is probable, the police ought to be notified, a raid made, and——"

"Nonsense!" Chick protested. "The job may not be attempted to-night. My object is to discover, if possible, whether preparations for it are being made. Your vault could not be burglarized from your office. It would have to be done from some other direction. I'll tell you why I wish to spend a night there."

"Well?"

"I wish to listen for sounds indicating that any such work is being done," Chick explained. "It would, of course, be done in the night. We could hear workmen by listening at the vault door, or, if not, we can open the vault and listen inside. If crooks are at work anywhere near it, we certainly could hear them. Then, Harvey, we could make a raid successfully. We might get in seriously wrong in doing so prematurely."

"You are right," Harvey nodded. "I see the point, now, and your scheme is a good one."

"You consent, then?"

"Yes, yes, certainly."

"Good!"

"I will inform my wife, and be with you in a very few minutes. I must invent a plausible story in explanation of my absence, lest the true occasion might alarm her. Make yourselves at home while I am absent," Harvey added, rising to leave the room.

"There is no rush," Chick informed him. "It's not reasonable to suppose there would be anything doing before midnight. We'd better not leave here before eleven o'clock. If we defer stealing into your office until midnight, there will be no danger from spies. Rogler guards himself very carefully, you know."

"Just as you say," Harvey nodded, turning for a moment. "I will leave it all to you."

It was precisely eleven o'clock when the three men left the banker's residence. Harvey had clad himself for the venture, and was slipping a revolver into his pocket when he rejoined the detectives.

The night was adapted to shady work. Heavy clouds had been steadily gathering since sunset, and they now hung low in the heavens, with not a star to be seen through the gray fog and drizzle that had begun to fall. Street lights burned with a misty, yellow halo surrounding them, while the crosstown streets appeared unusually dark and deserted.

It was nearly twelve when the three men approached the Kellogg Building, briefly viewing it from the opposite side of the avenue. It was shrouded in darkness, including the office of Gainard & Boyd.

"The corridor door is locked, I suppose?" Chick said quietly.

"Yes, but I have a key."

"We'll steal directly across, then, and enter as quickly as possible. Not a sound, mind you, after we enter. Walk on your toes."

Harvey nodded and led the way, noiselessly opening the heavy outer door, and the three men soon stood in the gloom of the silent corridor.

From the rear room in which the vault was located, and where an incandescent lamp was burning, a little light was shed into the main office, into which they proceeded and then into Cardiff's private office, from which a door opened into the rear room.

"There, I think we have turned the trick," Chick whispered.

"Sure thing," Patsy muttered. "No one could have seen or heard us."

"Had I better switch out the light?" Harvey inquired.

"No, no, that won't do," said Chick. "It is always lighted, and any deviation might betray our presence here. We'll sit quiet for a time and listen."

He set the door ajar and peered into the rear room. The face of the great steel vault was scarce ten feet away. Not a sound save the quiet breathing of the three men broke the silence.

Presently, lying prostrate, Chick placed his ear to the floor. For ten minutes he remained there, listening, but he could hear nothing, and began to think his quest would prove futile.

One o'clock came and brought no change in the situation.

"I guess there's nothing doing," said Harvey, the first to speak for half an hour.

"Be patient," Chick answered. "Crooks, like rats, work in the small hours of the night."

"That's true."

"Can you unlock the vault without making any noise?"

"I think so."

"Do so, then. Tread lightly."

Harvey stole across the room, with Chick at his elbow, and set to work on the combination. It took him only a

few moments to accomplish the task, and Chick then grasped the handles of the heavy steel doors.

"I'll open them," he whispered. "Step aside and give me room."

Harvey drew back a little.

Chick sagged back on the heavy doors. They began to open—and then a cry came from him that broke like the ring of a trumpet the prolonged silence.

A flood of electric light was in the vault. It was shed upward through a square hole in the floor. Below could be seen the underground room, the earth floor and plank walls, the broken rails and masonry, the steps enabling the crooks to climb into the vault—two of whom then went fleeing like frightened reptiles across the subterranean chamber.

One glance told Chick the story—that the vault already was looted of its contents, that the knavish work was only just completed, unheard through the heavy doors by the listening men, and that the thieves were at that moment making a precipitous get-away with their plunder.

Chick's alarming cry brought Patsy Garvan out of the private office, shouting:

"What's up? Something wrong?"

Chick had forced open both heavy doors. He swung round like a flash, pointing toward a door leading into the rear of the adjoining corridor.

"That way, Patsy," he shouted. "The trick has just been turned. The rascals are bolting. Head them off that way. Have a gun ready!"

"Trust me," Patsy yelled, whipping out a revolver and darting toward the corridor door.

"This way, Harvey," Chick added. "Follow me, and be ready to shoot."

Such exciting and rapidly moving episodes transpire in far less time than is taken to describe them. Scarce ten seconds had passed since Chick caught sight of the two men fleeing from the underground chamber. He knew not how many were down there, nor did he care. He knew that Nick probably was there, knew that he might be foully murdered by the rascals before their flight, and he took his life in his hands to prevent it.

While he shouted to Harvey to follow him, Chick bounded into the vault, revolver in hand, and dropped through the hole to the underground floor.

Harvey, though very much dazed for a few seconds, hastened to follow him.

Chick landed with the surefootedness of a cat. He caught sight of the man he had seen sitting on the whisky barrel in the court that afternoon, the man known as Taggart. That is to say, Chick had a glimpse at the skirts of the rascal's coat, when he disappeared into the tunnel connecting the two underground rooms.

Chick banged away on the instant, his revolver ringing like thunder through the confined quarters. The bullet tore through a corner of the tunnel wall, dislodging a great patch of earth and stones, which rattled down to the floor just as he reached the tunnel entrance.

It was dark in the narrow passageway, but Chick could see the light in the farther room, into which Taggart already had vanished, and he rushed after him through the narrow way until, when some six feet from the exit, a fusillade of bullets beat against the near wall, filling the air with dust and dirt and warning him not to be too headlong. The rapid reports of half a dozen revolvers nearly deafened him.

Harvey had stopped short, regarding his life of much greater value than all of the plunder the burglars had secured.

Chick Carter was much more game, however, and more used to such desperate encounters. He dropped flat upon the ground and crawled cautiously nearer the tunnel exit.

Through the smoke then filling the room, he caught sight of the last of several men crowding through the doorway of another passage, the door of which was closed before he could use his revolver.

As he sprang up to follow them, moreover, he heard Nick's voice, scarce five feet behind him.

"Look out, Chick! They may plug you through that door. It enters a passage leading up to a blind stone wall with a secret door."

Nick was right. Even while he spoke, a bullet tore through one of the panels of the door and buried itself in the earth near Chick's feet.

He sprang to one side, waiting for half a second, and then seized the knob and jerked the door open.

The passageway was deserted.

Chick bounded up the short incline, coming quickly to the wall mentioned, over which he groped in a vain effort to find the secret door.

Nick Carter had, in the meantime, emerged from his concealment and been seen by Harvey, who hastened to help him free himself from his bonds. At the same time he hurriedly told Nick what had occurred, or as much as he was given time to impart. For Nick no sooner was free than he darted after Chick, crying, up the gloomy passageway:

"There's nothing in trying to find that door, Chick. Return, and follow me by the way you entered. The rascals have made a clean-up, and are out of the building with their plunder by this time. Come this way."

Chick needed no second bidding. He came plunging down the passageway while Nick was speaking, and neither stopped for further explanations. Followed by Harvey, he hurriedly walked to the inner room, from which they climbed up through the looted vault, and then sought the rear door of the building by going through Harvey's office —the course taken by Patsy Garvan.

They found the door wide open—but the narrow court outside was deserted. They could see through the mist and gloom the high picket gate, visible against the better light in the street, and they ran that way—only to find the gate closed and securely locked.

The distant chugging of a rapidly moving motor car could be faintly heard. It told the story of a speedy transfer of the plunder, the precipitous flight of the robbers, the precautions taken to prevent immediate pursuit, and of the temporary failure of the work of the detectives.

In no direction was there any sign of Patsy Garvan.

CHAPTER IX.

PATSY'S VENTURE.

There was a very good reason for Patsy Garvan's disappearance, while Chick, Nick, and Harvey were engaged as described, for before responding to Chick's command to head off the fleeing burglars, who at once realized their danger upon seeing the vault door opened, Patsy had caught sight of the hole in the floor, as well as the lighted

room below it, and he then knew as well as Chick precisely what had been accomplished by the knaves.

Naturally, too, Patsy's next thought was of the rear court, and the course that probably would be taken by the crooks.

He rushed at top speed through Harvey's office, into the gloom of the adjoining corridor—and nearly into the arms of two of the gang. They were Gustave Rogler himself and Philip Scott, both carrying part of the plunder, and both of whom had heard Chick's shouts and at once guessed what had occurred.

Coming from a lighted room, moreover, Patsy was easily seen by the rascals. Both drew closer to the wall and waited, Scott dropping a large package of bonds wrapped in burlap, and jerking a sandbag from his hip pocket.

"Leave him to me, Rogler," he whispered in the latter's ear. "I'll fix him."

There was a single crashing blow when Patsy came through the doorway, a blow that caught him squarely on one side of his head. It stunned him and caused him to drop his revolver, while he fell in a crumpled heap on the corridor floor.

"Good work!" snarled Rogler fiercely.

"Shall I give him another?"

"No need. He's down and out."

"Down and out, Gus, is right."

"Get his gun, however," Rogler commanded. "We may need that. These cursed screws are giving us a close call in spite of the speed with which we've wound up the job."

"There's still another danger."

"Another?"

"The building may be surrounded."

"No." Rogler spoke with assurance. "Gainard's man would have warned us. He's out there with his car."

"Get a move on, then, and I'll follow," Scott growled, taking up the package he had dropped on the floor.

"Oh, there's breathing time," Rogler sneered. "They've gone down through the hole in the vault. Taggart and Dugan will fool them. They'll lure them into the secret passage and leave them there. It's lucky we had removed all of the stuff into the upper office. None must be left behind. We still have time to bring it out to the car and make a safe get-away."

"Not if we linger here," Scott cried impatiently.

"Come along, then."

Rogler flashed a ray of light upon the rear door and quickly unlocked it, and both men vanished into the gloomy court.

Patsy Garvan uttered a low moan, and moved slightly.

The head of the young detective was much harder than his assailants realized, and the stunning effect of the blow he had received was beginning to wane. A moment later he drew a deep breath, and then he began to realize in a dazed way what had occurred.

A breath of the night air through the open doorway struck him and hastened his recovery.

He started up a little and tried to rise, and then—he heard the tread of hurrying men from the direction of Gainard's office.

"Gee! I've got in wrong," flashed through his mind.

He hurriedly felt for his revolver, but he could not find it.

As an only resort to avoid detection, he then turned low against the wall, lying close to the baseboard in the darkness, just as three men hurried by him and were met by Rogler at the door. Neither of them noticed the prostrate figure in the gloom, nor did Rogler suppose for an instant that the stricken detective had revived.

"Is that all of it?" he hurriedly demanded, referring to the booty with which the three men were laden.

"No." It was Dugan's voice that responded. "The bags of specie are to come. They're so heavy——"

"Two of you return to get them," Rogler interrupted. "We'll lug this stuff out and pack it in the car. Move lively. We still have time to clean up the whole business and get away safely."

Patsy saw two of the men drop their burdens and rush back to Gainard's office.

The packages of plunder, all of which had been put into bags, were seized by Rogler and Scott, who, in company with Boyd, again hastened out of the court.

"Gee! here's a mess," thought Patsy. "How long have I been down and out? What's become of Chick and Harvey? Where is my revolver and——"

Patsy abruptly ended his rushing train of thought, his vain search for the missing weapon, his conjectures as to the whereabouts of his two companions, who at that moment were groping their way through the secret passage.

It had suddenly dawned with full force upon Patsy that burglars were getting away with a vast fortune, that he could not successfully oppose them without his revolver, nor even hope to prevent them without instant action and help from outside.

Rising hurriedly, he stole into the court. The high picket gate then was open, and he saw the rear light of a huge automobile at the curbing. It glowed like a blood-red eye through the mist and darkness.

Pausing, hoping to discover persons in the street to whom he could shout for assistance, Patsy noiselessly darted out to the gate, crouching low against the building to avoid detection. He peered out cautiously, but in no direction could he discover even a solitary pedestrian. He knew that he could accomplish nothing singlehanded against such desperate knaves as those in the near car.

A man muffled in a great coat was at the wheel. Boyd was lifting in the bags of plunder. Rogler and Scott were on their knees in the tonneau, stowing away the bags as rapidly as possible.

Patsy knew that the other two men, Dugan and Taggart, would come out in a very few seconds, when longer concealment on his part would be impossible.

He glanced at the rear of the huge car and saw that there was no trunk rack of which he could take advantage.

Patsy noticed, however, that the footboard was a long one, the car being one of the largest size, and he instantly resolved to take a desperate chance, the only one the situation presented.

Boyd then was putting the last package into the car. The heads of the two men in the tonneau, who still were stowing away the stolen cash and securities, were lowered from view. The man on the seat was watching the street straight ahead.

Patsy glided like a shadow across the sidewalk and crouched back of the car. He knew he had not been seen. He dropped to all fours, then crept around the rear wheel and reached the outside footboard, upon which he cautiously settled himself at nearly full length, twining one

arm under the board and firmly clasping it, and hooking one foot under the rear mud guard for additional leverage.

"By Jove! I'll take a chance they don't see me," he said to himself. "If they do, there'll be rough house right off the reel. Unless I'm discovered, or pitch from this infernally narrow perch, I'll find out where these rascals are going."

Dugan and Taggart arrived on the sidewalk at that moment and lifted two heavy bags of specie to the floor near the front seat.

"That's all," Dugan reported, panting for breath.

Rogler had settled himself in one corner and Scott in another, with Boyd still on the sidewalk. Rogler gave him a key, saying hurriedly:

"Now, Boyd, close that gate and lock it. We'll be off at once. Meet us to-morrow—you know where."

"You bet!"

"Tumble in here, you two. Now, Moran, break the record in a run for home."

"Faith, the record's only thirty minutes," said the chauffeur. "I'll clip it to nine."

"Thank God!" Rogler added, with a vicious snarl. "We've foiled Nick Carter this time—despite his having dodged the fate I had in store for him."

Boyd had locked the picket gate, then sped away and vanished down Fifth Avenue.

Taggart and Dugan had scrambled into the tonneau, and settled themselves among the packages on the floor. Moran applied the power, and the huge car bearing the stolen fortune swerved from the curbing and moved away. It moved faster and faster, still faster—and still with that dark figure stretched on the footboard, clutching it for dear life, a figure that must have been seen in any night less dark and dismal, or under any circumstances less strenuous and absorbing. For the four men in the car had settled as low as possible from the driving mist and drizzle, as well as from chance observation when passing the electric lights, and not an eye was turned in the direction of Patsy Garvan, clinging, with his jaws hard set and his nerves on edge, to the swaying footboard.

"Gee! it's ragged, all right, but he said nine minutes," passed through his mind, while the car sped north through Central Park. "I can hang on that long, barring we strike a rock, or a bad gully. If we do—well, it'll be time enough, then, to cross that bridge."

They struck no rock, however, nor ran into any gully, and grim-eyed Moran, clutching the wheel, nearly made good. For only thirty minutes had passed when the speeding car, swerving from the direct road to West Farms, struck into one running through a thickly wooded section in the direction of the lower bay, presently bringing up in the side yard of an isolated wooden dwelling, the precise location of which Patsy could not then determine.

Lamps were burning in the lower rooms, and the car scarce had come to a stop when a man appeared at the side door—luckily on the opposite side of the car from Patsy.

"Ah, you're here, eh? All hands?"

Naturally, the eyes of the several men in the car were turned in the direction of the speaker. Patsy had head enough to know that. He slipped noiselessly from the footboard, rolled nearly back of the car, paused for half a second to make sure he had not been heard—and then he crept away and was swallowed up in the darkness.

CHAPTER X.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

Mr. Samuel Cardiff occupied an attractive wooden residence in one of the outskirts of Fordham. He was in bed at one o'clock that morning, but was not asleep. There were very good reasons why Cardiff could not sleep.

He arose without waking his wife, upon hearing an automobile stop a short distance from his house, and went to gaze from a window. He could see the lights of the motionless car some fifty yards away. Presently, through the intervening mist and drizzle, the figure of a man loomed up, approaching the house. He was clad in a great, rough coat, with a cap pulled over his brow, while his bearded face was half buried in his collar. Obviously he was the chauffeur of the car.

Though Cardiff was not expecting a visitor, he knew that he was about to have one. He slipped into a bath robe and slippers, then stole down and opened the front door, just as the bearded man was mounting the steps.

"Not too loud," Cardiff quickly cautioned him, speaking with voice subdued. "My wife and children are sleeping. What do you want here at this time of the night?"

"I want to see you," hoarsely whispered the visitor. "Your name is Cardiff, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"You're the man, then."

"But I don't know you. Who are you?"

"My name is Morgan."

"Morgan?"

"Yes. Have a look."

Mr. Morgan drew off his thick glove and raised his right hand, holding it in drooping position, then crossed the first two fingers.

"You know it—you know that," he whispered. "The sign of the cross—the inverted cross. I come from the big gun. He said that you'd know the sign, and that I'm all right."

"What do you want?" Cardiff questioned apprehensively.

"I've got something to say to you. Let me into your library, then put on your clothes and come down. It can't be said in a minute."

"Is there any danger?"

"No. Everything is all right. But the big gun sent me out here to have a talk with you. Hang it! don't keep me whispering here."

"Come in, then—but be quiet."

"I'll be quiet enough," Morgan growled impatiently.

Cardiff admitted him and drew him into the library, switching on the light.

"Sit down," he directed. "I'll return in a couple of minutes. I'll go up and get dressed."

Morgan nodded grimly, and took a chair.

Nearly ten minutes had passed, when Cardiff returned, after dressing himself and explaining to his wife that one of his depositors had called on very important business. He closed the library door, then sat down near the table. He was ghastly pale, and trembling perceptibly.

"Now, Morgan, what do you want?" he asked. "Why were you sent out here?"

"Because I have a car, and there was no one else to send," Morgan growled, a bit forcibly. "That's why."

"Where were the others—Moran, Dugan, or——"

"Getting away with the stuff."

"You mean——"

"I mean that the trick has been turned," Morgan again interrupted. "The job is done, and the vault looted. All there is in it now wouldn't keep you in cigars for a month."

Cardiff's pale, frowning face lighted a little. Obviously the news was to his liking. He drew forward in his chair, nervously gripping his knees, and asked huskily:

"When was it done?"

"Just after midnight?"

"Was there any disturbance?"

"Not a bit."

"And they were not seen?"

"Only by one another."

"Thank God, then, it's over!" Cardiff fervently exclaimed. "The frightful anxiety and suspense are ended."

"I reckon so, Mr. Cardiff." Morgan grimly vouchsafed.

"But—but what of Carter?" Cardiff suddenly faltered.

"Carter—oh, he's dead!"

"Dead?"

"Killed."

"God!" Cardiff's teeth met with a snap. He raised both clenched hands and fiercely hissed: "Not murdered! I told Rogler I'd not stand for that."

"Well, mebbe I'm wrong, then," said Morgan. "Mebbe he isn't dead."

"What do you mean? Tell me what you mean."

"Well, I only heard them say something about killing him," Morgan grimly explained. "But as like as not it wasn't done. I wasn't down in the underground hole, so I didn't see for myself."

"Where were you?"

"Outside, with my car."

"Wasn't Moran there with Gainard's car?"

"Yes, sure; but he took away the stuff, and the gang along with it."

"But why did Rogler send you out here?"

"He wants you to join them, and he sent me to bring you."

"Join them to-night?" Cardiff gasped.

"Yes."

"For what?"

"He says that the money must be divided to-night, so that the gang may separate, as some of them have got to bolt," Morgan proceeded to explain. "The Carters, he says, have got wise to some of them, who must sneak for parts unknown."

"The Carters?"

"Nick Carter's assistants."

"Am I suspected?"

"No, not you, so far as I've heard. Rogler can tell you, I reckon. He said you would know where to join them. You do, don't you?"

The last came with sudden additional force.

"Why, yes, I know where they have gone," Cardiff admitted.

"And you know the way from here, so I can take you there?"

"Yes, yes, I do, of course. But——"

"There aren't any buts, then, Mr. Cardiff. You prepare to do so without a moment's delay."

"What do you mean by speaking like that to me? I'm not to be bullied into going—oh, my God!"

Morgan's voice had taken on a decidedly different ring. He turned down his coat collar, while Cardiff was speaking, then swept the beard from his face and cast it upon the floor.

Cardiff sank back in his chair on the verge of fainting.

"My God—oh, my God!" he repeated, with groans of utter dismay and despair. "Nick Carter—Nick Carter himself!"

"That's right, Cardiff, and it now is up to you to take your medicine," Nick said sternly. "It also is up to you to make such reparation as lies in your power. I had to resort to this little subterfuge, in order to force your hand and make sure you know just where Rogler and his gang, as well as the fortune stolen to-night, may be found. The trick has been turned, as I have said, but the end is not yet. Come on. Your hat and coat are in the hall. You must go with me."

Cardiff had, in a measure, pulled himself together while the detective was speaking.

"My God, I am ruined—hopelessly ruined!" he groaned, wringing his hands.

"You are, Cardiff, no mistake," Nick agreed. "You have played a desperate game, and you now must pay the price. What on earth caused you to enter into such a crime?"

"Oh, I was ruined before I went into this job," moaned Cardiff. "I lost nearly half of the firm's money in speculation, while Harvey was in Congress and living in Washington. I have kept the deficit covered up until now. I thought, if the safe could be robbed——"

"That that crime would cover your own, and that you would not be suspected," Nick interrupted. "That's an old trick, Cardiff. Who put it into your head?"

"Morley, the lawyer."

"I thought so. Rogler was back of him, wasn't he?"

"Yes."

"And that whisky agency was established only in order to get at your vault from below."

"I admit it, Carter," Cardiff bowed, groaning. "There's nothing for me, now, in denying anything. I must pay the price—yes, I must pay the price."

"You first must go with me," Nick repeated. "That gang must be rounded up to-night."

"But my wife——"

"Write a note for her and leave it here on the table," Nick cut in. "Tell her you have left home on business and will return to-morrow, or send her word. It will be the latter. Look sharp! I have no time to waste."

Cardiff obeyed, leaving a brief missive on the table, and then led the way to the hall. There he put on his overcoat and hat, presently leaving the house with the detective, to which he was not to return for many a day.

"Who are with you?" he inquired, as they were approaching the waiting car.

"Chick, Harvey, and a chauffeur," said Nick.

"Harvey—oh, my God! What shame—what dishonor! I would that I were dead!"

"Live to make good again," Nick advised. "There still is a chance for you."

There was very little said by the men in the car, for Nick was not in a mood to delay their departure. Cardiff was bundled in between the two detectives for safekeeping, and Nick at once said, with threatening austerity:

"Now, Cardiff, give this man the proper directions, the

shortest route to the refuge of the gang. No monkey business, mind you, or worse will be yours."

"I will, Carter," Cardiff humbly answered. "I'll do what I can to make good."

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST STRAW.

Less than half an hour after leaving Fordham, the car containing Nick Carter and his companions sped over the same road that Rogler and his confederates had followed only an hour before.

Presently lights could be seen through the intervening trees, the lower lights of a dwelling and those of a motionless motor car.

"Is that the house, Cardiff?" Nick demanded.

"Yes."

Cardiff had wilted to the last notch and was willing to do whatever the detective directed.

"Stop here, chauffeur," Nick commanded. "Put out your lights and wait for us."

"All right, Mr. Carter."

"We shall not be very long, take my word for it," Nick grimly added.

"My time is yours, sir."

"Hadn't I better go up there and reconnoiter?" Chick inquired, as the two detectives, closely followed by Harvey, sprang down to the road.

"I don't think it will be necessary," said Nick. "That is, unless—hold on! Stop, there, and throw up your hands!"

A dark figure had appeared near the edge of the road.

Nick's revolver was out on the instant, while he uttered his low commands.

They were echoed by a quick, gleeful laugh—and the voice of Patsy Garvan.

"Don't shoot, chief, or you might be sorry," he said quietly. "I reckoned you must be with this bunch."

"Great Scott!" Chick exclaimed. "It's Patsy!"

"Patsy on the spot," he added, laughing.

"But how in thunder came you here?"

Patsy briefly told his story, stating what he had seen, heard, and done.

Nick Carter shook him warmly by the hand, after listening to the modest recital. He knew that it meant much more than Patsy had said.

"You're all right, Patsy, but we'll talk of that later," said he significantly. "Now, what have you learned while waiting here?"

"The house is owned by Gainard, or the man who has been using that alias," said Patsy. "His true name is Page."

"How did you discover that?"

"Listening at a window."

"What's been done here?"

"Nothing, as yet," said Patsy. "The gang lugged all of the plunder into the house, and it's now on the floor of one of the side rooms. They have been talking about hiding it until it can be counted and divided, but no move has been made in that direction. I've been hanging around in case there was. I wanted to learn the hiding place. When I saw the auto lights, I thought you must have got wise in some way and you were coming here. So I hiked down to meet you."

'Where is Rogler?" Nick inquired.

"In the dining room."

"With all of the gang?"

"Yes. They've been discussing the whole business and filling up with booze."

"It ought to be soft walking, then, to take them in," Nick remarked.

"Soft is no name for it," chuckled Patsy. "It will be child's play."

"We'll lose no time, then, in winding up the business," said Nick. "Come with us, Cardiff."

"Why do you want me?" Cardiff asked apprehensively.

"I want you to call Page to the door," said Nick. "Your voice will be recognized, and the door then will be readily opened. We'll do the rest," he added, with grim significance.

"Very well," muttered Cardiff.

Nick and Cardiff led the way toward the house, Patsy following, and Chick and Harvey bringing up in the rear.

Gazing through a side window, Nick discovered all of the gang seated around the dining-room table. All had been drinking freely, and evidently were in high exultation over the success of their burglary.

"Step to this window," whispered Nick, drawing Cardiff nearer. "Knock on it, and let them see your face, then tell them to let you in the side door."

Cardiff obeyed.

Nick heard a shout of welcome from within, and he then dragged Cardiff toward the side door, where Chick, Patsy, and Harvey were waiting.

"You'll remain here, Cardiff, if you're wise," Nick said quietly.

"I shall do so, Carter."

"Now, boys, ready with your guns," Nick whispered. "Don't shoot unless it becomes necessary. I don't think it will."

The hurried steps of an approaching man could be heard in the entry. In another moment the door was opened by Dugan, with a grin on his face.

Nick's hand shot out, caught Dugan by the throat, dragged him out on the steps before the rascal could even gasp, and then a single blow left him senseless on the greensward near by.

Patsy snapped a pair of handcuffs on Dugan's ankles.

"Now, come!" whispered Nick.

Closely followed by Chick, Patsy, and Harvey, each with drawn revolvers, Nick strode through the entry and into the dining room.

"Now, if you fellows will sit quiet there'll not be any bloodshed," he coolly remarked. "The first who moves, however, will immediately become a dead issue. Take my tip, if you're wise, and swallow your medicine quietly."

There are situations in which men, even strong men, are utterly nonplused, and that was one of them. Not a man in the gang had the nerve to offer the slightest resistance. The consternation, dismay, and bitter imprecations of all, particularly Rogler, may better be imagined than recorded in print.

Within half an hour, nevertheless, the entire gang was secured and on their way back to the city—and the Tombs. Morley and Scott were arrested the following day, making the round-up complete.

All were easily convicted and sent to Sing Sing for long terms—with one exception.

The exception was Gustave Rogler, who already was wanted for murder. He cheated the chair, however, by taking poison in his cell in the Tombs, the contents of

a capsule which he had concealed in the heel of his boot. A third defeat by Nick Carter was the straw that broke the camel's back.

All of the stolen money, bonds, and securities were recovered, much to Harvey's satisfaction and relief. He was a heavy loser, however, through the earlier treachery of his partner—though not heavy enough to cripple him, or prevent him from liberally rewarding the Carters for their splendid work.

THE END.

"Nick Carter and Keno McCall; or, The Fate of a Stool Pigeon," is the title of the story that will be found in the next issue of this weekly, No. 34, out May 3d. Here was a case that would have set any one guessing. The paying teller of one of New York's greatest banks had suddenly disappeared with $30,000 of the bank's funds. It looked like a case of robbery. But it was not. That is the strange part of it. However, it did not take Nick Carter long to realize that there was a deep plot to unravel, and to find himself matched against one of the wiliest crooks that he had ever encountered.

UNDER THE KNIFE;

Or, THE CLOAK OF GUILT.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

CHAPTER I.

KEENE FINDS TWO BAD EGGS.

"Move on, gentlemen! One way or the other. You are blocking the doorway. Either come in or go out."

"Come in is easier said than done, Mr. Keene."

The detective smiled slightly, much as if inclined to agree with the speaker, and then moved away amid the throng of people filling the spacious vestibule and office of the magnificent Boston Hotel.

"What name did you say, Peasley?" asked the companion of the man addressed. "Did you call him Keene?"

"Yes," was the reply; "don't you know him?"

"I cannot say that I do."

"Humph! I thought everybody knew Sheridan Keene."

"Not the detective!" exclaimed the questioner; and his gaze again went searching for the tall, lithe figure and forceful face of the man who, with a manner at once courteous and commanding, had accosted them, and who now had disappeared in the crowd. "You don't mean, Peasley, that that was Sheridan Keene, the detective?"

"The same," nodded Peasley; "and one of the cleverest in the profesh. The reception here to-night has brought out a mob, and Keene is probably here on special duty. Let's wriggle through to the café."

There was, indeed, a crowd. Though the reception dinner was ended, the dining room still was thronged with chattering people. The commodious parlors, the large library, the elaborate main office and the devious corridors, were made well-nigh impassable by the great gathering.

Nearly all of the men were in full evening dress. The gorgeous silks and satins of the ladies augmented with glistening rainbow hues the dazzling brilliancy of the animated picture. From a hundred snowy bosoms priceless jewels blazed, as if with living fire, and diamonds vied on all sides with eyes lent radiance by wine and excitement.

"A rare opportunity for one of the light-fingered gentry," dryly observed Peasley's companion, as they made their way toward the café.

"True," nodded Peasley; "that is probably why so many officers are about here."

"I haven't noticed many."

"They are in citizen's dress," laughed Peasley. "They are like the commercial traveler's overcoat in his expense account; you don't see it, but it's there. Try lifting something that don't belong to you, my dear boy; and before you see him, you'll feel the hand of one of them on your shoulder, and most likely a nice pair of bracelets on your wrists. Come and have a Manhattan."

It was the hour, too, when the theaters were closing; when limousines and taxicabs were rushing madly over the cold pavements; when café, lunch room, and saloon were putting in their final strokes of the day.

And, too, it was the time when cozy private dining rooms in the best hotels were at a premium.

Ten minutes after the curtain had fallen on the grand opera at the Boston, a taxicab whirled up to the side door of the hotel, and a party entered. Sheridan Keene drew somewhat aside to allow them to pass, but they halted quite near him and waited for the elevator.

The party consisted of two men and two women. One of the men was in middle life. He was short and stout, with an oily, unctuous countenance, and eyes as placidly bright as his expansive polished shirt front. He was booked on the register as Doctor Cyrus Yardley, London, England.

The other man was younger. He was tall and narrow, with shoulders slightly bowed. His face was sallow; his nose was hooked; his eyes were grayish-yellow and very uninviting. He, too, was English, and in the presence of a third party Doctor Yardley invariably addressed him as Lord Moreland.

One of their companions was an elderly woman, quite richly dressed, and whose pale cheeks and hollow eyes indicated declining health. The other was her daughter, still in the twenties. She wore a Vandyke hat with drooping plumes, and a handsome opera cloak hung loose over her lovely white shoulders, half hiding her fine figure. Her face was quite handsome, with regular features, a pretty mouth, and brilliant dark eyes.

The expression of the latter struck Sheridan Keene, during his brief glance at her, as presenting a curious mingling of resolution, restlessness, and apprehension. They were flashed about while the party stood waiting, until they fell upon one of the hotel waiters, a colored man in evening dress, who stood like a statue against the wall near by, there either by accident or design.

Between the handsome girl in the opera cloak and the erect, motionless figure of this colored servant, Sheridan Keene saw one swift, intelligent glance, as of mutual understanding, pass like a quick flash. It appealed to him with rather curious significance, yet he did not consider it a matter for his investigation, and courtesy demanded that he should not stare longer at the girl; for the detective was in full evening dress, and, so far as looks indicated, he might have been one of the distinguished guests of the occasion. He turned and moved a few yards away.

At the same moment the girl took advantage of the delay at the elevator. She nodded presently to a lady across the corridor, then stepped over to reply to her question:

"Have you been to the opera, Miss Russell?"

"Yes," smiled the girl; "we have just returned. What a crowd!"

"Decidedly," laughed the lady, moving on. "But it now is beginning to thin out a little."

Miss Russell moved a few steps farther from her companions, and stood with her back toward them, apparently gazing at something down the corridor. Scarce any person there would have noticed that she had drawn nearer the motionless figure of the colored waiter, who had not stirred from his position. Yet to him she said softly:

"Is the room ready? Careful!"

The man answered her without a movement of his head, and scarce a movement of his lips, even.

"Yes, miss!"

"Has any one come?"

"Not yet."

"If he comes first, do not follow him in there. I shall lock the door after I've entered. Then see that I am not interrupted."

"Leave it to me, miss. I'll stand outside."

This episode had required but a moment. The elevator was approaching from above. Miss Russell rejoined her companions.

"Are you going to the smoking room before retiring, Doctor Yardley?" she now asked, with a quick glance at the round face of the London physician.

"I think so, my dear Stella," replied Doctor Yardley, with one of his oily smiles. "Lord Moreland cannot sleep without his smoke, you know. We shall come up presently, my dear, and I then will visit your mother. You do not feel quite exhausted, Mrs. Russell?"

The elderly woman shook her head, and forced a smile to her pale features.

"Not quite, doctor," she said, rather wearily; "but I think I'll retire."

"Oh, by all means! I will come in and give you a powder before you sleep, however, which will have a tendency to——"

"Going up!"

The voice of the elevator boy cut short the physician's remark, and Stella Russell suddenly stepped nearer.

"Please see my mother to her room, Moreland," she said quickly. "I will come up presently. I wish to speak to Mrs. Paget, who has just gone into the drawing-room."

Before she had finished this brief explanation, even, the girl's voice had become unsteady, and the color was fading from her cheeks.

A gentleman had entered by the side door, passing the group. He hurried through the corridor, and turned down another, which adjoined several private dining rooms overlooking the street. He had passed the group without a glance, nor had the girl appeared to observe him. He was a tall man, with a pointed, dark beard, and he wore an Inverness coat.

"It is already late, Stella," Mrs. Russell objected, with some austerity. "Do not remain too long."

"Only a little while," replied the girl. "You are keeping the car waiting!"

Only by an effort had she escaped them, and by taking advantage of the circumstances in a way that indicated previous designing. As the car ascended, containing her mother and Moreland, she turned again to Doctor Yardley.

"If you go up before I do, doctor, stay with her till I come, will you?" she asked, with her dark eyes squarely meeting those of the physician.

Doctor Yardley's countenance did not change; but in the searching scrutiny he bestowed upon her, there was a mingling of craftiness and suspicion which brought a flush to the girl's cheeks.

"Certainly, my dear Stella," he bowed. "Where did you say you were going?"

"Merely to the drawing-room, doctor. You'll find me there if you want me. I wish to speak to Mrs. Paget."

"I shall be in the smoking room for a half hour. After that I will join you."

The girl nodded and smiled.

The physician turned in the direction of the office, and approached the cigar case; but his crafty eyes had a backward turn until Stella Russell had entered the drawing-room.

The moment the latter was alone she moved more quickly and decisively. Casting a backward glance, to make sure that she was not followed, she quickly located the lady to which she had previously spoken. Approaching her from one side, she slipped a hand around her arm and significantly pressed it, saying softly:

"If any person should ask for me, Mrs. Paget, kindly say I've just left you, and that you didn't notice which way I went. I wish briefly to meet a friend on the sly."

Mrs. Paget laughed and seemed to understand.

"Leave inquisitive parties to me, dear," she replied, with a nod.

Stella Russell thanked her with an expressive look, then hastened through the adjoining parlor and to the corridor door. A glance revealed Doctor Yardley still hanging over the cigar case, with his back toward her. Without a moment's hesitation she now entered the corridor, turning quickly into that adjoining it, and hastened after the man in the Inverness coat. Less than five minutes had passed since these several persons had entered the house.

Something like a quarter hour later, Sheridan Keene sauntered down to the smoking room and bar. The crowd had thinned out, and several tables were vacant. One of these was near that at which two men were seated, whom the detective recognized as the companions of the girl in an opera cloak. Without knowing why, he did not fancy their faces; yet when he sat down near by, lighting a cigar and taking up an evening paper, he noticed that they did not pay him the slightest attention, as they might have done if really worthy of suspicion.

Five minutes passed.

The detective still puffed at his cigar, and appeared absorbed in the matter he was reading.

The men at the next table still gossiped over their drinks.

And then, for the first time, Doctor Yardley let drop a succession of remarks that caused Sheridan Keene to prick up his ears.

With a dainty liquor glass poised between his thumb and finger, and with so complacently crafty a voice, that the detective now set him down for a knave, the physician observed:

"You should have learned by this time, Moreland, that I know fast colors. There will nothing come out in the

washing. The pigeon already is flying lower, you may take my word for that. With the mother bird netted, we may surely clip the wings of the other. She is already weakening, Moreland, take my word for it."

The man opposite shrugged his narrow shoulders, and frowned through the smoke from his cigar.

"What do you tell by?" he demanded tersely, in a dry, rasping voice. "I have seen none of your favorable signs."

"You haven't my eyes," rejoined Doctor Yardley, replacing his glass on the table and rubbing his soft, fat hands. "My professional experience, Jimmy, is really worth more than all your worldly knowledge."

"Do you think so?"

"I know so! You judge a woman by her looks and her conduct; I read her by the throbbing of her pulse, the heart's infallible index. She is weakening, Jimmy, take my word for it. We have been here five days; in five days more the trick shall have been turned."

Again the man opposite shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"I am not so sure of it, Yardley," he smiled, through the smoke. "A woman's conduct goes far with me."

"Faugh! the bird has ceased beating her cage! That is a sure sign of exhaustion and despair."

"Or a rest that prepares for still greater efforts," grumbled Moreland. "Where is she now?"

"Up in the drawing-room."

"Where?"

"In the drawing-room," repeated Doctor Yardley. "Why d you start?"

"She wasn't there when I came down."

It was the physician's turn to show surprise. He leaned suddenly forward, with an ugly light dispelling the placidity of his narrow eyes, demanding sharply:

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I am sure! I have eyes enough for that, at least."

"It is possible that I may be wrong! Yes, even I may be wrong!" muttered the physician, starting up. "Come with me at once! We will see where she is."

Keene followed the two men with his gaze, as they hurried from the room, and there settled on his face an expression which many a malefactor could recall to his cost. Presently he arose and followed them, saying to himself:

"They are two bad eggs, or I'm much mistaken. The drawing-room, eh?"

He turned his steps in that direction. It was after eleven o'clock. Many of the people had departed, and the halls were now quite clear. In the parlor and corridors women were putting on their outside garments, aided by companions and escorts, and the rumble of carriages in the street outside was almost incessant.

Keene paused at the threshold of the drawing-room and glanced over the people within. Neither of the men he sought, nor the girl in the opera cloak, were among them. The absence of all three was like a spur in the side of his suspicion; he quickened his steps, flashing a quick glance into the adjoining parlor, and then struck to the corridor which branched off along one side of the great hotel.

Near the door of a private dining room some thirty feet away a colored servant was standing, with his gaze intently turned toward a side door making to the street, as if with distrust of some person or persons who had just passed out. From one of the nearer rooms a party of five, three of them ladies, was approaching, putting on their wraps.

Something in the attitude of the negro led Sheridan Keene to start through the corridor. At the same moment the door near which the servant was standing suddenly opened, and a man stepped forth, wearing an Inverness coat.

At the same moment Keene heard the voice of Doctor Yardley, from some quarter which he could not then determine, shouting wildly:

"Stop that man! Stop him! He has committed murder. Stop that man!"

The voice came from outside the window of the dining room from which the man in the Inverness coat had emerged. The latter halted for one instant and closed the door of the room, which immediately drowned the sound of Yardley's reiterated cries. Then his eyes swept the corridor in both directions. The waiter stood between him and the street door. In the opposite direction were a half dozen people, among them Sheridan Keene.

The delay on the part of this man was but the fraction of a second. Then he started like one bent on escape, and darted toward a near stairway making to a rear basement.

Keene whipped out his revolver, and started after him like a hound let loose from leash.

"Halt, or I'll fire!" he thundered, as he ran.

"Fire, if you wish!"

Bang!

The bullet splintered the woodwork of the door through which the man in the Inverness coat was vanishing.

The screams of affrighted women rose on every side. The colored waiter rushed to the door of the private dining room and opened it. As he passed it, in pursuit of the fleeing man, Keene glanced into the room.

Stretched dead upon the floor was the form of the girl he had seen a half hour previous; but now her snowy bosom and rich attire were wet with crimson blood!

CHAPTER II.

A MAN OF NERVE.

Sheridan Keen now knew that he had struck a dark and mysterious case.

He was sure of some deep-laid, vicious scheme of some kind, and probably more than one. The remarks of the two men in the smoking room had been significant of one at least.

Yet there was certainly something more.

This appeared in the fact that Yardley had been the man to discover the appalling crime just committed. That the discovery was a surprise, and had occasioned him great horror and dismay, had sounded in his voice.

As he passed the door of the private dining room, Keene's quick eyes caught sight of the oily-faced doctor climbing in through the window from the street. It was very evident that his attempt to prevent the escape of the murderer was genuine, and it indicated that no criminal collusion existed between him and the man in the Inverness coat.

Yet Keene had read the doctor like a book, and was satisfied that he was a villain. To the eyes of a detective like Sheridan Keene, the soul of a knave appeared in every expression of this smooth physician's unctuous and crafty face.

Here, then, was a mystery on top of a mystery, and it became vitally necessary to secure this last criminal red-handed.

These were the pertinent deductions that flashed through the mind of Sheridan Keene the instant he saw the body of the girl on the dining-room floor, and Yardley climbing in through the window.

With breakneck recklessness, born of a determination to overtake and arrest him, he flew down the stairs taken by the man in the Inverness coat.

They led to a long entry in the basement. This was as dark as a man's pocket, but through two side doors could be dimly discerned a large laundry, with windows opening to a rear yard.

For a moment the detective paused and listened. He had lost his man in the intense darkness, and suspected that he was hiding.

Presently he heard a key being cautiously turned in a door at the farther end of the long corridor. That settled it. Keene instantly plunged on through the darkness, guiding himself by the near wall, and shouted the stern command:

"Halt, or I'll shoot you!"

"If you do, you'll shoot an innocent man!"

"Obey me, then!"

"I'd sooner shoot myself!"

"If innocent, why need to fly?"

"Honor demands it!"

Though he was sure enough that the voice was feigned, it had such a ring of true manhood that the detective held his fire.

All this occurred in the fraction of a minute, while the men still were twenty or thirty feet apart, and enveloped in Egyptian darkness.

Then the door at which the fugitive had been working was suddenly opened. He had succeeded in unlocking it and withdrawing the key.

Thrown into outline against the starlight in the back yard, Keene again beheld the man, and, for a moment, could see his own way.

He darted forward to prevent the closing of the door, and missed it only by a hair. Then it was forcibly closed, nearly taking in the tips of his fingers, and the key was turned from the outside.

Despite the awful crime he feared had been committed, Keene could not but admire the nerve of this man who, under the very muzzle of a revolver, could deliberately stand to insert the key and secure the door.

With that way of egress cut off, Keene darted back to the laundry. There the darkness was less intense, and he sprang to the nearest window.

The fugitive was scaling the high wooden fence at the opposite side of the yard, and in a twinkling had disappeared over the top.

Keene threw open the window, leaped out into the yard, and followed him, climbing over the high fence with the agility of a cat.

"You evidently mean to lead me a warm chase, my man, but I'll gamble I'll run you down!" he said to himself, not a particle displeased, because his game was worth the hunt.

The fence he had scaled bordered a double line of railway tracks, with a high embankment on either side. Surmounting that opposite were several long blocks of fine brick dwellings, with rear yards; also a corresponding high wooden fence, with an alley between.

Sheridan Keene darted down to the level tracks, and began a desperate sprint after his victim. The man in the Inverness coat was fifty yards away, running at the top of his speed.

Suddenly he diverged to the left; clambering up the high embankment with both hands and feet. On reaching the top he scaled the wooden fence, with the skill and celerity of an athlete.

It brought him into a long alley back of the brick dwellings. There he spied an open gate of one of the back yards.

A light was burning in the kitchen.

The fugitive secured the gate with the same deliberate nerve that he had locked the hotel door, when preventing Keene's immediate egress.

Now he smoothed his pointed beard, adjusted his Inverness, and unceremoniously opened the back door of the house and stole into the entry.

A buxom Irish servant girl, who was seated on the knee of a burly, blue-coated policeman in the kitchen, started up with a scream.

The amazed officer, not a little confused at being unexpectedly caught off his beat, leaped up and drew his club.

The man in the Inverness coat seemed eminently superior to any situation.

"That's all right, Casey!" he cried quickly, with a deep and authoritative voice. "Put up that club!"

"Be gob! who are you?" gasped the astonished officer.

"I am Sheridan Keene, the detective!" cried the man in the Inverness, speaking with great rapidity and sternness. "There's been a murder committed in the hotel yonder, and I've tracked the assassin into these back yards. Have you heard anybody moving around out there?"

"Divil a soul, so help me!"

"If you do, Casey, arrest him at once and hold him till I return! Can I get through this house to the front street?"

"Yis, yis, sor!" cried the girl, catching up his question, and glad to be rid of him so easily.

"That's good!"

"Sure, it's meself that'll show you the way."

"Don't you bother, my man! You look after the man out back there, the two of you, and hold him fast if you find him!"

His last stern command sounded from the stairs he was already mounting. The entire episode had occupied but a quarter minute.

The man in the Inverness strode up the stairs and through the main hall, which was in darkness, and let himself out by the front door, closing it after him.

The midnight street was silent and deserted.

The nervy fugitive slipped off his coat, folded it under his arm, set his crush hat at a little sharper angle on his head, brushed the dust from the knees of his trousers, then whisked off a false beard, thrust it into his pocket, and coolly descended the steps and walked away.

Thus the man in the Inverness coat vanished forever.

At precisely the same moment Sheridan Keene came over the back alley fence.

He easily had noted where his man left the railway tracks. On the right embankment, directly opposite, there was a lofty red signal lantern.

Keene barely had gained the alley when the gate of one of the near yards was quickly opened and a burly policeman rushed upon him with drawn club, and crowded him down against the fence.

"Surrinder, ye spalpeen!" he roared, with genuine Celtic belligerence. "Be gob! ye're took now, and took for kapes! Put down thim hands, or I'll be after——"

"Let me up! What the devil——"

"Put thim down, I say, or I'll crack ye on the nob wid me blackthorn! Sure, it's no whisp av a Sheridan Keene that has ye now in his grasp. Away wid ye, Biddy, and call back the detictive. Be off, now, and tell him I've nailed his man for him. I'll wait a bit in the kitchen while ye bring him."

Though hot with rage, Keene now grasped the whole situation, and saw the speediest way out of his brief dilemma.

"I surrender, Casey," he cried quickly. "Let me up!"

"Divil a up," growled Casey, whose two hundred pounds were still crushing Keene to the fence. "Divil a up till I've clapped these darbies on ye. It's a grased pig ye are, if ye gave Keene the slip; but yer'll not fool Mike Casey so aizy."

"It's not necessary to fool a fool," said Keene sternly.

"Phat's that you say?"

"Put up those bracelets, Officer Casey, and listen to me! I am an inspector of police, Sheridan Keene himself, and in pursuit of the man who evidently gave you my name. He has made an ass of both of us!"

Casey involuntarily felt of his ears.

"There's my badge," cried Keene angrily. "Feel of it, if you cannot see. Take me into the house at once, or you'll find yourself without a commission! What are you doing out back here, anyway?"

The voice of the detective now had an authority which the patrolman was not slow to recognize, and Casey began to vaguely suspect his own blunder. Yet, without losing his grasp on the detective's arm, he led him through the yard and into the kitchen.

"Now, Casey, what do you say?" sternly demanded Keene, when the light fell on his face.

The burly Irishman instantly dropped his arm, and fell back in great consternation.

"Phat the divil can I say, sor?" he rejoined. "Sure, I couldn't tell 'twas you in the dark, not being a cat! As for the other blackguard, faith, you're as like to turn up looking loike him as loike yerself. So, how did I know 'twasn't you that was him? And in the eagerness to do me juty——"

"That will do, Casey," Keene interposed, with less austerity. "We have both been egregiously fooled, and by some infernal sharp fellow."

"Bedad, sor, little doubt of that!"

"By thus delaying me he has given me the slip for a time," said Keene; "but I'll yet run him to earth. Did he enter this house?"

"Sure he did, sor."

"What did he say?"

"He walked right in, big as life, he did. 'I'm Sheridan Keene,' sez he, 'and I am after a man,' sez he, 'who has kilt some poor divil in the hotel over yonder.'"

"He said his name was Sheridan Keene, did he?"

"Thim were his own blessed words."

"Then he must know me by sight, and that I was the man in pursuit of him."

"Be gob, sor, he knew my name, too! For he called me Officer Casey, and told me to put up me club."

"Then he can be no very great stranger about here, since he could speak both of our names. Which way did he go?"

"Straight up through the house, sor."

"Did he appear to know the way?"

"Sure, he'd not aven let Biddy show him."

"Ah, is that so!" exclaimed Keene. "Where are the stairs?"

"They're out this way, sir," cried the servant, who was now returning. "Sure, Mr. Casey, I can't see anything of the other man."

"Never mind, Biddy. Wan's enough."

"Did the stranger appear to have any difficulty in locating these stairs?" Keene now demanded, pausing at a turn in the narrow entry from which they ascended.

"Not a bit, sir," declared the girl. "I saw him turn right up as if he knew all about them."

"Show me the way to the front door," said Keene sharply. "Follow me, Casey."

Not to be long duped seriously, the shrewd detective was already picking up new threads and turning his mishap to an advantage. The nerve and cunning displayed by the party in an Inverness coat convinced him that he was in pursuit of a man of more than ordinary intelligence and sagacity.

The detective knew that he would not have remained in the house, and the fact that he had come from the basement with such ease and celerity indicated that he might be familiar with the construction of the several houses in that locality.

"Come down here, Casey!" commanded Keene, already on the sidewalk. "And you, girl, secure the doors that we left open out back."

Keene then waited till the girl had closed the door, when he turned to Casey and said sharply:

"Now, Officer Casey, listen to me."

"Yis, sor!"

"If I forget that I have found you off your beat tonight, make sure that you forget it also!"

"Bedad, sor, I will have no trouble doing that, thank you, sor," grinned the officer eagerly saluting.

"See that you do, then."

"I will, sor."

"It will require that nothing shall be said of this house, nor of the man who passed through it. See that the mouth of that girl is properly closed."

"Faith, sor, I will. And, sure, it'll not be the first time, either!" cried Casey, smacking his lips.

"Be about it, then. And leave the other party to me."

TO BE CONTINUED.

HOW SMALL AND WEAK BIRDS FLY WHEN MIGRATING.

The muscles of a bird's wing are particularly strong in proportion to the weight of its body. As a rule, small birds that have come very far across the sea have been blown over the water during violent gales, and many of them arrive on land in a half-dead condition. One reason for the fact is that in fair weather small and weak birds make long journeys successfully over considerable tracts of ocean, is that they are carried on the backs of

the larger ones. When passing the autumn in Crete, a writer asserts that he distinctly heard the twittering of small birds when flocks of sand cranes were passing overhead on their way to Southern shores. On another occasion, when firing a gun, he saw three small birds rise from the flock and disappear again among the cranes. A native priest assured him that they came over from Europe with them, while it has been found that small birds, never before seen in certain parts, have been brought thither at times of migration. Another cause is that small birds do not make their journeys in one flight. They generally rest during the day, searching for food, and thus proceed to their destination by easy stages.

THE TRUE HERO.

The little New England village of Mapleton never held a prettier girl than Rose Rayburn. Her family had but recently moved into the vicinity, and as yet had made no acquaintances.

Her wavy brown hair, creamy complexion, and wistful blue eyes, combined with her graceful form and ladylike manners, captivated the susceptible youths of Mapleton at first sight.

Among the most ardent of her admirers were two promising boys named Dick Walton and Bob Bently.

One morning, about a month after Rose's first appearance in Mapleton, these two chums were strolling down the main street of the village, engaged in earnest conversation, plotting how to make the acquaintance of the "Pretty Stranger," as they called her.

"I think I know how we can do it, Bob," said Dick Walton to his companion.

"Tell me, do," said Bob Bently; "I'm all attention."

"I want to ask you first if you have seen Signor Humbuggi and his acting bear yet?"

"Yes; and I believe that bear is a fraud," Bob asserted. "It's a man dressed up in a bear's skin."

"Exactly. I got that secret from Humbuggi's assistant for a cigar. Well, with Signor Humbuggi's help, we can make the Pretty Stranger's acquaintance in a very romantic manner."

"How?" asked Bob eagerly. "I don't understand."

"In this way," replied Dick, "we'll hire the skin from Humbuggi, as he only exhibits his bear at night, and you will dress up in it. Then you'll go to the woods just back of the Pretty Stranger's house, where you are likely to meet her. I will be near, and when you scare her I will gallantly come to the rescue, discharging half a dozen blank cartridges at you. Then you will turn and run away, and I'll support the Pretty Stranger's fainting form upon my manly bosom! Ah!"

"Bully! tiptop! first rate!" were Bob's delighted exclamation. "What a fine headpiece you must have, Dick!"

Upon afterthought, however, Bob Bently did not like the plan so much, because, he said, some farmer might mistake him for a real bear, and perhaps fill him full of buckshot.

Dick easily overruled all his objections by saying that he could not make the Pretty Stranger's acquaintance in any other way.

They immediately called upon Signor Humbuggi and stated their business. At first the signor indignantly denied that his bear was a man, but when Dick offered him a good sum for the loan of the skin, and promised to keep the transaction an inviolable secret, he said no more.

He produced the skin, and half an hour afterward Bob, as respectable a looking bear as one would care to see, got down upon all fours, after the manner of a bear, and Dick led him by means of chain down an unfrequented lane toward the woods on the outskirts of the village, on arriving at which, they separated. The "bear" took its way directly through the brush and bramble, while Dick Walton followed a path which led toward a glade where he expected to meet Rose Rayburn.

Not five minutes after the boys had separated Dick heard a shrill scream. It came from a short distance ahead, in a girlish voice.

Not doubting that Bob Bently had met the Pretty Stranger and scared her, Dick cocked his revolver, and rushed in the direction indicated by the sound.

Catching sight of a white dress through the trees, he pressed on; but as he drew nearer he heard a harsh voice saying:

"Now, miss, yer better be quiet, and hand over them trinkets; for if yer yell again I'll cut yer throat."

Dick Walton crouched down, overcome by fear and consternation, for, although a cunning, shrewd boy, he did not possess a spark of true, genuine courage.

At first he did not know what to do, but, setting his wits to work, he resolved to run to the nearest house to get assistance to capture the robber, as he had no doubt the speaker was.

He accordingly sneaked away, and ran like a deer down the path, and was soon lost to sight among the trees.

"Help! help!" cried Rose Rayburn, for it was she who was threatened by the tramp. "Help!"

"Be still, can't you!" muttered the ruffian, holding one dirty hand over the girl's mouth, while he wrested a necklace from her with the other.

At this moment some one was heard rapidly approaching. The tramp turned to flee, but his path was suddenly obstructed by a young sailor, who came very opportunely to Rose's rescue.

"Take that, you scoundrel!" he cried, springing upon the ruffian, and hurling him to one side. The man turned quickly, and, rushing at the stripling, tried to stab him with a knife. The young sailor avoided the blow; then throwing the whole strength of his body into his right arm, he sprang upon the tramp, and, with one blow, knocked him senseless to the earth.

He had just disposed of his assailant, and was turning to address Rose, when he was startled by a shrill scream from that young lady. Snatching up a stout club that was lying near, he sprang before her, and just as a strange dark object emerged from the trees, and advanced toward them. It was about the size of a Newfoundland dog, and walked upon four legs.

It was Bob Bently in the bearskin, but the young sailor thought it was a real bear.

The bear rose upon its hind feet and advanced at a faster pace. The young sailor, at the same time, commenced to retreat, when suddenly his foot slipped, and he fell. The next moment the bear was upon him. But he maintained his presence of mind, and, raising his club, he brought it down with crushing force upon the bear's head.

He was greatly surprised to see the bear tumble over

from the blow; but he was still more surprised to hear a human groan issue from the animal.

Uttering an exclamation of astonishment, the young sailor knelt down beside the bear, and, on examining it closely, found a seam in the skin, which he ripped open with his jackknife.

The mystery was explained as Bob Bently rolled out.

Bob was only partially stunned by the blow, and, soon recovering his senses, the young sailor demanded an explanation of Bob Bently.

In a few words Bob told all about the plot which he and his cowardly comrade had made.

The young sailor laughed heartily at Bob's discomfiture; and Rose, thinking all the danger was over, came up to them just as he was saying:

"That was a nicely planned affair, but it didn't end quite as well as you reckoned it would. Now, young fellow, if you don't want the thrashing you richly deserve, you had better run down to the village as fast as you can and get the constable to take that tramp off. Be lively, now."

Without a moment's hesitation Bob started off toward the village at his best speed, leaving the bearskin behind him.

"There goes the bear!" laughed the young sailor, turning to Rose.

"Yes," rejoined the fair girl; "but I still owe you many thanks for disposing of that ruffian, there. How did it happen that you were so near at that time?"

"I was looking for a cousin of mine who lives around here some place," was the reply.

"How fortunate you took this road!" said Rose. "What is your cousin's name?"

"John Rayburn—maybe you know him."

"I ought to," quickly replied Rose, "for he is my own father!"

"And we—we are cousins!" exclaimed the young sailor.

"Yes, and I'm so glad," said Rose.

Yes, we repeat, they were cousins, but not so nearly related that they could not become—as they did—nearer and dearer to each other in after years.

True heroism always gains its reward.

WHY THEY MAKE AN S BACKWARD.

It is a common thing to see on home-made signs in various parts of the city the letter S written backward. This is often, also, done by children. Speaking on the subject a distinguished physician, who is in the habit of knowing the whys and wherefores of things, said: "The explanation is very simple. The natural method of most writing is to go ahead; to write from you, but in making an S the process is to start at the top of the letter and write backward. The child or the person unaccustomed to making letters, begins at the top of the letter S and writes forward, and then wonders why it is that the letter looks so queer. The engraver of card plates is obliged to engrave his writing backward in order that when printed it shall read forward. The force of habit in engraving backward is so strong that letter engravers of card plates or other engraved plates often make mistakes when called upon to make writing on silverware. In this way a letter engraver once put the inscription on a whole set of valuable silverware backward, and never discovered his error until his customer found it out. In the same way spoons, watches, rings, and so on, have often been marked backward by engravers. Such mistakes are costly, and often make it necessary to cover over again the articles so marked. Compositors are obliged to set up their matter backward, and soon learn to read it either way with equal facility.

DOES THE MOON INFLUENCE THE WEATHER?

Attempts have been frequently made to connect the state of the weather with the aspects of the planets, the changes of the moon, or some other astronomical occurrences. The idea that the weather is dependent on the moon's phases still finds favor with some people, although any appreciable connection has been repeatedly disproved. Changes in the weather are brought about by changes in the season, the prevalence or nonprevalence of certain winds, and the amount of moisture in the atmosphere. Here are some indications which may be accepted with some amount of certainty: A rosy sky at sunset, whether clouded or clear, a gray sky in the morning, a low dawn—that is, when the first signs of the dawn appear on the horizon—all indicate fair weather. A red sky in the morning indicates bad weather, or much wind; and a high dawn—or when the first signs of the dawn are seen above a bank of clouds—presages wind. From the clouds we may draw the following conclusions: Soft-looking and delicate clouds foretell fine weather, with moderate breezes; hard-edged clouds, wind; rolled or ragged clouds, strong wind. A bright-yellow sky at sunset also presages wind, and a pale-yellow sky, wet. Dew and fogs both indicate fine weather, while remarkable clearness of the atmosphere near the horizon—causing distant objects to appear very distinct and nearer than usual—is one of the most characteristic signs of coming wet.

HINTS ON THE USE OF DUMB-BELLS.

For preliminary practice the dumb-bells should not exceed six pounds each in weight. For boys, four pounds will be sufficient to start with. First, take up the bells and raise and swing them from the standing position. Stoop, seize both bells, recover upright position, and raise them above the head. Repeat this by lowering the bells to the ground, bending the knees, and then rising on the upright position. Moving the bells in horizontal and slanting planes forms the next exercise. Then comes circular movements, first with one bell, then with the other, and finally with both at once. These are succeeded by various elbow exercises, the spread arms and the head swing, shoulder feats, thrusting or striking motions. You cannot acquire these by merely verbal descriptions. The names of the movements indicate sufficiently what they are, and these, with the exercise also of a little common sense, should enable you to use the bells, after a time, with dexterity. Be sure, however, and not it at first.

THE IMMOVABLE-COIN TRICK.

Place a silver dime in the center of your hand when fully opened. Then ask your friend to take an ordinary clothes brush and brush it off your hand. He must not shake your hand, but be satisfied to do as if brushing his coat. If he does this you will be safe in telling him if he brushes it off he can have the coin.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Chile's Deep Interest in the Panama Canal.

Roland Harvey, secretary of the American legation at Santiago, Chile, while in London on his way home, declared that no country is looking forward with greater anticipation to the opening of the Panama Canal than Chile. The shifting of trade routes which will follow the opening of the canal is being seriously considered by shipping and kindred business interests, and plans are already being made in Chile for direct steamship service to New York via the canal.

Cruel Form of Punishment.

A species of punishment, reminiscent of barbarism, was meted out not long ago to a seven-year-old boy, of Kiyosu, Japan, by the child's father. The little lad committed some trivial act of disobedience, and the father punished him by burying him for forty-eight hours in a hole in the ground, leaving only his head above the surface.

A Mysterious Disappearance.

After an absence of forty-one years a former resident of Hutchinson, Kan., has returned. His wife, who had waited all these years for him to bring in an armful of wood, expressed surprise at seeing him and upbraided herself for having thought her husband was going to "desert" her.

The husband disdained making any explanation as to where he had been, on the ground that women ask "so many fool questions."

Horine Starts Training for Coming Campaign.

George Horine, holder of world's high-jumping record of 6 feet 7 inches, is about to resume training for an extensive campaign during 1913. The former student at Stanford University is now traveling for a San Francisco sporting-goods house and will make the Garden City his training quarters for the coming outdoor track season.

Horine, being a member of the San Francisco Olympic Club and a participant in many of its field meets, has found it necessary to train seriously in order to perform up to his reputation as a high jumper.

Piper is Well Rewarded.

A good deal of sentiment and not a few sovereigns have recently been showered on a Scottish piper, who appeared outside Hampden House, the London residence of the Duke of Abercorn, on the night of the late duke's death, and played the "Lament." It was announced in every London paper the next morning that the act was spontaneous on the part of an old servant of the family, and the new duke sent scouts out to discover the faithful retainer. He was found all right, living in a court off Holborn, and taken to the present duke, who bestowed upon him a handsome sum of money.

Since then the "Lament" has been played outside the residence of almost every family of means or title in London having the slightest connection with Scotland which had suffered bereavement. It was being repeated at the doors of the late Duke of Crawford recently, when the police came upon the scene and took a hand in the game. The piper, they discovered, was a street musician, and not a genuine Scotch piper. Street musicians in London are allowed to play only during certain hours, and then only on streets where the residents do not object to their music.

Aeroplane to be Used in Arctic.

Important results are expected from the French arctic expedition, which will set out from Havre in June for the exploration and scientific examination of Franz Josef Land, under the command of Jules de Payer, an Austrian by birth, whose father was the discoverer of this archipelago in 1873.

De Payer's ship will carry, besides himself, a navy lieutenant, an ensign, two captains, two medical men, naturalists, geologists, and an army aviator, who will have two aëroplanes, as exploration by air will, if practicable, be an important feature of the expedition.

During the next winter the mission will make astronomical, physical, and meteorological observations, and important data bearing on the earth's minor movements is expected to be obtained.

A wireless station will be erected, which will be in communication with the Eiffel Tower. When the polar winter breaks the expedition will divide into two parties, one of which, headed by De Payer and provided with several sledges, dogs, small boats, and kites, will make a dash for the northeast to ascertain the starting point of the unfathomable abyss which bounds the north European submarine continent, according to the researches of Nansen and the Prince of Monaco. The other party will thoroughly examine the canals, fiords, and hitherto unexplored islands of the archipelago from the standpoint of geology, biology, oceanography, et cetera.

The De Payer expedition expects to be gone at least a year and a half.

Coeducation in Russia Makes Little Progress.

The recent discussion and general opposition in Austria to coeducation in the schools and colleges of the dual monarchy has brought comparison to the working of this system of instruction in Russia.

Khorol, a town near Kiev, carries the banner for severe ordinances. There, as in many provincial towns, boy pupils have been forbidden to go walking with the girl students in the town streets, but the Khorol board of education followed this ordinance up with an order prohibiting the teachers also to be seen on the streets in company with women, on the ground that they should furnish an example of proper conduct to their pupils. At a high-school party held in Khorol during the holidays the school authorities at midnight segregated the boy pupils in a locked room, dismissed the girls unescorted, and released the young men only when time enough had elapsed for the young women to reach their homes.

Must Remain Prisoner Until He is Twenty-one.

Convicted on the charge of stealing a five-cent bottle of soda water and given eleven years in the Fulton County reformatory as punishment, the supreme court of Georgia

decided that Ollie Taylor, now thirteen years of age, must serve out his time.

Appeal was made that the time given the boy was out of all proportion to the offense, but the court decided that while the nature of the offense should be considered by the trial judge, the length of the term imposed would not invalidate the sentence.

Taylor has already served three years. He will be twenty-one when he comes out.

Emden Canal Project Again.

The decision of the Belgian government to build a great canal from Antwerp to Liege in order to supply that port with Belgium coal in place of the English article, has been seized upon in Germany as a strong argument for building the projected canal from the lower Rhine along the Dutch frontier to the North Sea, at Emden.

It is suggested in this connection that the Belgium canal be extended from Liege to the Rhine, thus making a great internal waterway from Antwerp to Emden. At a recent meeting of the budget committee of the Prussian Diet the minister of public works and railways said the government was deeply interested in the Rhine-Emden project, and this remark has given the friends of it renewed hope for its realization. They argue that the new canal must be made spacious enough to accommodate vessels of 6,000 tons in order to enable it to compete successfully with the Rhine, which can carry vessels of only 3,000 tons.

Of course, the chief argument for building a connection from the Rhine to the Belgium canal at Liege is that it would give much cheaper transportation for German iron and steel to the seaboard. Antwerp is the chief exporting point for German steel, but the long railway haul is a great handicap to the export business.

Fierce Reptile Kills Many Dogs.

Mr. Knight, of the Eiffel Blue Mine; Mr. Ward, of the Glencairn-Camplon; Mr. Johnston, a contractor, and others accompanied by eight dogs and a few natives have had a remarkable experience while out pig hunting in India. Suddenly the dogs pointed something, and a terrier rushed in and seized a great black mamba, one of the most dreaded snakes. Before the party could grasp the situation a pointer was bitten, and dropped dead. Another pointer suffered similarly the next moment, and the terrier was killed.

By this time the excitement was intense. All the sportsmen and the remaining five dogs had joined in the mêlée. A greyhound was bitten and died, and then its owner fired and blew part of the mamba away. Another member of the party got in a few successful revolver shots, but not before all the dogs had been bitten and seven had died, including a Great Dane, valued at $400.

Frauds in Postage Stamps.

The new parcel-post stamps, which run from one cent to one dollar in denomination, are causing trouble to the post-office authorities owing to the fact that they are all printed in red. This confuses the parcel-post clerks and opens the door to fraudulent practices on the part of certain persons.

The denomination of one cent is indicated by the words "One-Cent-One" on the bottom part of the stamp. In the dollar stamp the word "Dollar" takes the place of "Cent." It has been found, it is said, that in a number of instances the word "Dollar" has been cut out of that stamp and pasted over the word "Cent" on the one-cent stamp.

The clerks in their hurry of canceling the stamps have mistaken the patched-up one-cent for the dollar stamp. The designs of the two stamps are similar, the exception being the center picture.

It is the purpose of the government to withdraw the present dollar stamp of this issue from circulation owing to the fact that there is far too much detail in its background, and to substitute a new dollar stamp with modification of its central part. Of this dollar denomination 400,000 stamps have been issued.

There is trouble also with the latest regular issue of postage stamps. The one-cent stamp is green. All of the stamps of this issue, except the two-cent, has the head of Franklin. Washington's head is on the two-cent. It has been found that by the use of chemicals the green color can be changed to black, which is the color of the $1 stamp. This opens an avenue to fraud.

Finds Vase of Ancient Coins.

A wine grower at Marmery, France, while digging in his garden has unearthed a vase filled with gold, silver, and copper coins of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in excellent preservation. Among the coins are some bearing effigies of Henry VIII. and Edward VI., of England. During the so-called "religious wars," the village of Marmery was the scene of a massacre about 1565, and it is supposed that it was buried by the owners.

The Tibetan Bible.

The Kah-gyur, or Tibetan Bible, consists of 108 volumes of 1,000 pages each, containing 1,083 separate books. Each of the volumes weighs ten pounds, and forms a package twenty-six inches long, eight inches broad, and eight inches deep. This Bible requires a dozen yaks for its transport, and the carved wooden blocks from which it is printed needs rows of houses, like a city, for their storage. A trifle of Mongols paid 7,000 oxen for a copy of this Bible. In addition to the Bible there are 225 volumes of commentaries which are necessary for its understanding. There is also a large collection of revelations which supplement the Bible.

English Birds for Canada.

Five hundred English songbirds, including larks, goldfinches, linnets, tits, and robins, selected by the agent general for British Columbia, have been dispatched from London to Victoria, B. C., where they will be let loose to build nests in the forests of Vancouver Island.

The Dominion Express, which has undertaken to convey the songsters, has had an aviary specially constructed on the Canadian Pacific steamer *Montcalm*, and has reserved a special car for the journey across Canada. An attendant who is an expert whistler will travel with the birds to keep them in song.

Gets a $25,000 Tip.

Bell boys, head porters, and all others who serve and also stand and wait, will learn with envy of what is probably the largest tip ever received by a hotel employee. The person who is to receive this gratuity is Josephine Hodges, ten days old, the daughter of E. T. D. Hodges, manager of the Waldorf Hotel's traffic department. A trust fund of $25,000 has been established for the little girl by a

rich steel man of Pittsburgh, who does not wish his name disclosed.

Hodges, from behind the head porter's desk at the Waldorf, told recently how the good fortune came to his daughter. He said that for twelve or fourteen years he had looked after the Pittsburgher's baggage and railroad transportation when he was in New York, bought his steamship tickets, routed his private car, and looked after his mail. In all this time, Hodges said, he had never accepted a gratuity of any kind from the patron of the house.

"Well, I'll get you some time," the rich man once remarked.

"A year ago, when I told him that I had married," Hodges asserted, "he said to me: 'Well, I guess I'll have to fix up the heir to the throne.'

"I thought he was merely joking, and laughed with him. The other day when he came in I told him that I was a father, and that my daughter's name was Josephine. The Pittsburgher asked if he might see the child. He came up to our home, and seemed very much pleased with the youngster. A few days ago I received his check for $25,000, to be put in the bank as a trust fund."

Filipinos Don't Want Self-government Yet.

Citizens of the Philippine Islands do not desire a government independent of the United States, according to Judge James Ross, of Manila, chairman of the Democratic campaign committee of the Philippines.

"To a great extent the talk of independence for the Philippines has been the work of politicians," said Judge Ross. "The people have not been in favor of it at all. As a matter of fact, officials and others are now in fear that they might be granted independence.

"They realize that they are not prepared for a step of this kind. The establishment of a State government under the protection of the United States, with much the same rights and privileges as the States of the Union, would suit everybody."

Convicts in Transfer Chained to Car Seats.

Chained to the car seats, one prisoner to each seat, two coach loads of Federal convicts were taken, under a heavy guard, recently from the District of Columbia jail to the Minnesota State penitentiary at Stillwater. The transfer of the prisoners was made at the instigation of the department of justice and their transfer was made necessary by the crowded condition of the Federal penitentiaries at Atlanta and Moundsville, Va., which district Federal prisoners generally are transferred to.

Friends of Birds Triumph.

The McLean bill, providing for national protection of migratory birds, has been passed by the Senate as an amendment to the agricultural appropriation bill. Its advocates feel sure the House will accept the amendment, and that it will become a law.

This measure delegates to the department of agriculture the power to regulate the killing of all migratory birds. Its effect would be to protect many species of wild fowl and shore birds that are rapidly approaching extinction. In support of the measure it is asserted that it will prove a boon to agricultural interests by giving insect-eating birds a chance to increase.

Agitation for Federal protection of migratory birds has been going on for nine years., but no decided sentiment was aroused until the American Game Protective and Propagation Association, whose headquarters are in New York, obtained hearings before Congress for the McLean bill and other measures having the same general purpose.

Cannot Mar Czar's Face With Dates.

The awe and reverence in which the Russians—especially the small bureaucrats—hold the czar will cost the government a vast sum of money, for it has been found desirable to recall the entire issue of new postage stamps struck off to commemorate the tercentenary celebration of the reign of the house of Romanoff.

These stamps bore the portraits of the present czar and other czars, and the postmasters declared that they could not possibly commit the lese majesty necessary in thumping the obliterating stamp on the physiognomies of their exalted rulers, past and present.

Perry's Flagship Raised.

Commodore Perry's flagship, the *Niagara*, which for almost a century has rested at the bottom of Misery Bay, an arm of Lake Erie, was raised to the surface recently.

Four huge chains had been placed beneath the hull, which is 110 feet long, and with a grinding and creaking it was lifted through a huge opening that had been cut in the ice. Pontoons were placed beneath the old warship, and it was towed to Erie.

The timbers were found to be in a good state of preservation, and it is expected no difficulty will be encountered in its reconstruction.

Like Colonial Times.

To restore the famous Old South Meeting House, at Boston, to its appearance in Colonial times, workingmen are scrubbing its outside surface with paint remover and soap, cleaning it of the accumulation of a century and a half.

The tower and the walls of the ancient landmark at Washington and Milk Streets, once turned into a riding academy by British army officers and now used as a show place for historical relics, have been shorn of the growth of ivy which has partly concealed them. The bricks are to be washed to their natural red color of other days, and the windows are being repainted in Colonial fashion.

Will Reduce Number of Military Aides.

There will be a marked reduction in the amount of gold lace to be seen around the White House during the present administration if President Wilson carries out his plan to reduce the number of military aides which have attended the two former presidents.

It became known to-day that Major Thomas L. Rhodes, U. S. A., who was military aide and medical adviser to President Taft, had recommended that the present corps of twelve officers of the army, navy, and marine corps be cut in half. Furthermore, President Wilson probably will dispense with the presence of a uniformed aide in his travels about the country.

The present system of a personal military staff at the White House was created by President Roosevelt and continued by President Taft. Major Archibald W. Butt, who lost his life in the *Titanic* disaster, was responsible for establishing the present custom of wearing full-dress uniform while accompanying the former president. He felt

that, as he was on duty, he should conform to the regulations and appear in uniform. His understanding of the regulations was accepted by his brother officers on duty at the White House.

Shoots Corporal for Reporting.

A corporal of the Fiscal Guards, Lisbon, Portugal, while on his rounds at night, found one of the soldiers asleep inside his sentry box. The corporal reported the man, who was punished with two days' imprisonment.

A few nights later the same soldier was on duty, and asked the corporal when he passed: "Are you satisfied at what you did to me?" and then shot him dead. The soldier, after clapping his hands and dancing round the corporal's body, got three rockets out of his sentry box and discharged them into the air as a sign of rejoicing.

Golf Drive vs. Fungo Hit.

In the estimation of a baseball player there is nothing that can be projected farther than a hard-hit ball. Even McGraw, who doesn't suffer from many delusions, is confident of this. He doesn't see, for example, how a golf ball can travel farther than a baseball. No heavy hitter that has ever appeared at the Polo Grounds has been able to send a ball from the home plate over the center-field fence, and McGraw doesn't see how a golf player can accomplish the feat. He is so certain of it that he is backing his judgment against that of an ambitious young golf player of New York.

The longest hit on record in baseball is 419 feet and ½ inch, made by "Ed" Walsh, of the Chicago White Sox. This was accomplished by Walsh in fungo hitting, the technical term for knocking out flies. The longest golf drive on record is that made by William Horne, the English player, who sent the ball 388 yards, or 1,164 feet. It will be seen that there is considerable distance between the two records, and on the face of it McGraw appears to be a sure loser.

But even to a golf player, who doesn't measure distances the same as a baseball player, the sight of the far-off center-field fence at the Polo Grounds might develop a mental hazard that would make it impossible for him to drive the ball over it. Horne, who is the longest driver in the world, and who, incidentally, was the masked player at Van Cortlandt Park last autumn, might do it on the first attempt. But golf playing is a contrary sort of thing. Unless a man is nerveless he would be just as likely in trying to drive a ball the distance specified in this instance to bunt it down toward the pitcher's box as he would to slam it over the fence.

Golf players will watch the experiment with a good deal of interest. For the honor of the ancient and royal game they trust that the rising young player who has undertaken the task will not be off his game when he makes the attempt, for in that event McGraw and any others who happen to be present will learn what a golf club and a golf ball really are in addition to being just plain golf paraphernalia.

Auto Polo in London.

Richard Klegin, an American promoter, who introduced prize fighting in France, has commenced negotiations for motor polo games in London during the coming season. He purposes to take over the eight participants from the games held in Madison Square Garden, New York.

Klegin says he has several English backers, who believe Londoners will be interested in this thrilling and dangerous sport, and has already contracted with American motorists who are ready to sacrifice life and limb. He says the contests will occur either in the Olympia or at the Shepherd's Bush stadium, probably in May.

Klegin is also taking two semiprofessional baseball teams from Philadelphia to Paris in April to introduce the American national game in France.

Fossa Champion Eater of World.

The glutton, for a long time the biggest eater of any animal of its size at the zoölogical gardens, London, has been deposed after a heroic contest with the fossa, a small, very fierce, wolflike animal which arrived recently from Madagascar.

There is little to choose between the fossa and the glutton in size, so that they started equal in respect of capacity. On October 28th, the day of the first appearance of the fossa at the zoölogical gardens, it beat all records as a prolific eater among animals of its class. These include the glutton and the Tasmanian devil, which have the appearance of small, squat wolves.

The diet of these animals is similar, consisting of horseflesh, rabbit, and bones. The figures of their average daily food consumption from October 28th up to the present are:

The fossa, 192 pounds of food.

The glutton, 114 pounds of food.

Tasmanian devil, 90 pounds of food.

These figures do not do full credit to the victor. While the glutton is content with its horseflesh and rabbit, the fossa has consumed most of the woodwork in its cage and has licked off all the paint from its sleeping quarters. If the keeper fed it from dawn to dusk it would still be ready for more.

His Will Tattooed on Shoulder Blade.

Probably the oddest will ever drawn by man is that of Harry Kohlman, a miner from San Bernardino County, Cal., who has had his last testament tattooed in purple ink on his left shoulder blade.

Kohlman said he was about to take a trip through the troubled regions of Mexico and he wanted a will that was indestructible and one that would survive robbers or fire. His property is valued at $50,000.

Still inflamed from the tattooer's needle, Kohlman recently exhibited his will to a few friends. There are but fourteen words in the "document," but lawyers say it is perfectly legal. It reads: "All my claims south of Red Hill, San Bernardino County, to J. H. Cart—H. Kohlman."

Foreigners Don't Want New Nickels.

The strange design and leaden appearance of the new five-cent pieces now circulating in large quantities are causing considerable trouble among the foreigners, many of whom absolutely refuse to accept the coins in change. Some Italians and Polish people believe that the pieces are not money and insist on getting the old nickels or none at all.

The chief ground on which the coins are refused seems to be the dull finish which gives them a leaden appearance. The new nickel is the first coin minted with this finish, and foreigners are suspicious of the coin.

On first glance, there is no evidence of a denomination

on the piece, and unless one looks carefully it is impossible to see the letters that designate it as "five cents." It will take some little time before the free circulation of the coins among the foreigners becomes general and until that time the street-car conductors, merchants, and others will be wise to maintain a stock of the old-time nickels.

Bewitched Bible Picks Out Thief.

The efficacy of white witchcraft as a means of detecting evildoers was raised in the second Berlin penal court recently, when an elderly woman named Adelheld Gebhardt, who lives in the village of Bohnsdorf, was charged with slandering a neighbor, the wife of the village barber.

Frau Gebhardt has an old leather-bound Bible which, she declares, is enchanted. When a crime is committed in the village she takes the Bible in one hand and puts a huge, ancient key between the leaves, holding the ring end of the key in the other hand. She repeats an appropriate text, and then asks: "Dear Bible, say who is the guilty person," meanwhile herself reciting the names of possible offenders. When the right name is uttered the Bible springs out of her hand and falls to the floor.

This method of detecting crime naturally caused considerable unpleasantness in the village. Recently Frau Gebhardt missed some money. The Bible declared that the barber's wife was the thief. Frau Gebhardt promptly denounced her, but in the absence of evidence the charge fell through. Frau Gebhardt was then prosecuted for slander.

She showed the court how she established the guilt of the barber's wife with the Bible, which actually again fell to the floor when the accused pronounced the woman's name. The court, however, decided that one reason for the falling of the Bible was Frau Gebhardt's septuagenarian fingers could not hold it while she was reciting twenty names; also that unconscious reflex action of the nerves at the mention of a particular name had something to do with it. But in view of her obvious sincerity, Frau Gebhardt was let off with a fine of $1.50.

Boys Rewarded for Kindness to Animals.

Rewards for kindness to animals during the last year were presented recently at the annual public meeting of the Animal Rescue League, in the foyer of the Copley-Plaza Hotel, Boston, to Carl Nelson, a 14-year-old South Boston boy; John Murphy, an 11-year-old South End youngster; Louis Alippi, 11 years old, also of the South End, and Frederick S. Lynch, a 7-year-old chap, of Roxbury.

Carl Nelson, who lives at 72 Tudor Street, South Boston, and who at different times had saved cats and small dogs from mischievous youths, received a silver medal, suitably inscribed, for his bravery and thoughtfulness.

John Murphy, who lives at 14 Bond Street, received an appropriate book. Last fall he rescued a tiny kitten from a brood that had been thrown out into the street and left to the mercy of stray dogs and bad boys. At other times he picked up forlorn cats that had been deserted by their owners and carried them down to the Carver Street branch of the league. In an interview, his 5-year-old sister, Miss Ruth Murphy, said:

"I knows where the Anmal Rescoo League is, too, but I'se too little to go down there all alone."

At present John has only one pet, a big cat known as Bob. Until recently he had a dachshund "sausage dog," who was called Sprudles, and who had two heirs, Mutt and Jeff.

Louis Alippi, of 40 Dundee Street, received a silver Lincoln medal for taking several stray cats to the league's headquarters. His pets are two enormous cats, Bunny and Lilly, which he brought in from the street when they were kittens and educated to respectable cathood.

Frederick S. Lynch, of 77 Sterling Street, was awarded a book for his kindness in bringing to the attention of the league officers the destitute condition of several cats and dogs in his neighborhood.

Mrs. Margaret Deland entertained the league members, of whom more than 400 were present, with an account of Rudyard Kipling's kindness to his two dogs. The officers of the league were all reelected. The president, Mrs. Huntington Smith, read the report of the work done in the past year, when the league saved the lives of 27,670 cats, 4,646 dogs, 265 horses, 175 birds, 37 smaller animals, and one alligator.

Inspector Might Get Stung.

A curious difficulty has caused the abandonment of one of the British government's minor measures. This is the bee diseases bill, which sought to impose penalties on persons sending diseased bees from one place to another by post. When the bill was under discussion it was remembered that there was nothing to prevent a diseased bee journeying on his own account. Infected swarms might even fly from one spot to another. On such a journey, a bee meeting an inspector might refuse to stop and produce a health certificate. Hence it became apparent that the provisions of the bill were more or less of a farce.

International Track Meet Planned.

Tentative plans for an international track and field meet between teams representing Harvard and Yale and Oxford and Cambridge universities have been drawn up. The plans have been agreed upon by the athletic management at the two universities in America and have been forwarded to England.

The Harvard stadium will be the place of meeting. June 19th is the date suggested by Harvard and Yale, but the English authorities would prefer to come here the first week in July.

The eleven events suggested are: The 100-yard dash, 440-yard dash, 120-yard hurdles, high jump, broad jump, hammer throw, 880-yard run, mile run, three-mile run, and two of the following three events: 220-yard dash, 220-yard hurdle, or shotput.

Badgers War on Rats.

Farmers in Kent and Sussex, England, suffering from a plague of rats, for tails of which they pay a penny each, are to turn out badgers to wage war upon this and other species of vermin. In Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, where badgers are plentiful, members of the Kent and Sussex badger clubs are capturing the animals for removal to the southern counties.

Squirrel Holds Up Traffic.

A gray squirrel and a kind-hearted motorman blocked traffic for ten minutes in busy Connecticut Avenue, Washington, recently. The squirrel found a nut between the car tracks, stopped, dug it out, and sat down to eat it. The clanging of the bell did not move him, and the motorman

seeing that the little animal would be killed stopped his car and went out to "shoo" him off.

The squirrel and the motorman proceeded, following their natural inclinations, unminded of the fact that Secretary of the Interior Lane, Senator Henry F. Ashurst, Senator John D. Works, and other statesmen were aboard the car.

Finally, realizing that he had to get out or be captured, the squirrel took a fresh hold on the nut, scurried off across the sidewalk and up the fence that incloses the British embassy.

United States League Starts Again.

The United States League of Baseball Clubs has been reorganized in New York, with eight clubs in the circuit. William A. Whitman, owner of the Reading, Pa., franchise, was elected president. The cities in the league are New York, Newark, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Lynchburg, Va., and Reading, Pa. The season, it was announced, would start May 10 and close September 16. The schedule will consist of 120 games.

The United States League was organized last year, but only played a part of its schedule. It is not protected by the rules of organized baseball.

Says Illiteracy is Rapidly Decreasing.

Outlining the achievements of the public-school system in eradicating illiteracy from the population of this country, Philander P. Claxton, United States commissioner of education, recently addressed an audience of the department of superintendence of the National Educational Association.

He declared illiteracy in the United States has been reduced from 20 to 7 per cent. That in the white population it has diminished from 12 to 3 per cent; in the negro population from 95 to 30 per cent; among the foreign born from 14 to 12½ per cent, and that at present only 1.1 per cent of children of foreign born cannot read or write.

"This has been accomplished by an educational system that has been declared a failure, and is even now greatly maligned," he declared. "The ideals I hope to see this system attain are the complete obliteration of all illiteracy, the passage of compulsory attendance laws in the States where they do not at present exist, and the more complete enforcement of existing laws.

"More efforts should be made to reach the children in isolated districts and in the slums. Children in the country and in factory districts of our cities should be kept in high schools over the adolescent period. If it is necessary for the children to work let the products of their vocational or industrial training be sold, and the proceeds applied to their support during the educational period. Do not let their labor be exploited by capitalists."

Island Seeks Annexation.

Announcement was made recently by Thomas J. Keenan, of Pittsburgh, president of the American Association of the Isle of Pines, that a petition directed to President Wilson and the Senate, requesting annexation to the island, would be put in circulation in this country and the Isle of Pines.

The petition states that 6,000 Americans, who reside or have property in this Isle of Pines, wish to have action taken to make the island a permanent possession of the United States. The Isle of Pines, the petition says, has become a distinctively American colony, citizens of the United States owning more than 95 per cent of the land, and making up a majority of the population.

Parcel-post Dog Now Safe.

The official dog catcher of Hackensack, N. J., succeeded at last in landing in the pound the now famous terrier that Letter Carrier John Keenan saved from him with a parcel-post stamp. Some one had taken the dog's collar as a memento, and the stamp and the terrier's freedom went with it.

The dog's stay in the pound was brief, however, for Chief of Police Jacob Dunn, who enjoyed the joke when two of his men and the dog catcher were baffled by the parcel-post stamp, at once adopted the terrier, caused him to be given a good bath, bought a new collar and license for him, and took him to his home.

Can Jeff Come Back?

Jim Jeffries is now seriously considering a return to the ring. "I put the proposition to the big fellow recently," said Tom Jones, the fight promoter. "From the way he received the suggestion I judged that I had touched something he had been spending a deal of thought upon. When I asked him why he didn't go back into the ring he took me at once into his private office and we talked it over for three hours.

"Jeff was rather worried as to what his friends might think of it. I suggested that we call in his Brother Jack, and ask him what he thought about it. Jeff consented to this and we put the question to Jack. Without a moment's hesitation Jack replied: 'I think Jim's a fool if he doesn't go back into the ring.'

"Jeff then said that he would take the matter under advisement."

Peter Maher says he is going to try to come back and lick them all. Peter is heavier by twenty pounds than he was. He is training hard and will fight soon at one of Philadelphia's clubs.

Indian Gets His Rifle Back.

Chief Hollow Horn Bear, an Ogalala Sioux, a powerful bronzed giant, six feet three inches, who gave up his gun twenty years ago when the government ordered all guns taken from the Indians in the Bad Lands, recently had it returned to him in the office of Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs Abbott. Hollow Horn Bear recognized his weapon by a rawhide wrapping on the barrel.

New Altitude Record.

A new world's record for altitude was established recently at the Buc Aërodrome, France, by the French aviator, Perreyon. In a monoplane he rose to a height of 6,000 meters, approximately 19,650 feet.

The previous world's record was held by Georges Legagneux, who reached an altitude of 18,776 feet at Villacoublay, on September 17, 1912.

Conductors to the Rescue.

In Stockholm the street-car conductors sell hatpin protectors for a cent apiece to all women who wish to buy. The implements do not protect the hatpin. They are fastened to the point and prevent a hatpin from doing damage to the person or property of men and women sitting or standing near by.

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